

Israeli soldier plays with explosives, sets guard post on fire

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli soldier injured a sleeping comrade and destroyed his guard post in southern Lebanon by playing with explosives, a military spokesman said on Tuesday. The soldier set off the explosives to a room next to where his comrades were sleeping. One man suffered burns, and a large amount of weapons and ammunition was destroyed. The other soldiers managed to put out the flames. "Their action was nothing short of a miracle. The incident could have ended in disaster," the spokesman said. An enquiry has been opened. The troops involved belonged to an elite unit, on duty in the eastern sector of the strip of southern Lebanon occupied by Israel.

Jordan Times

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جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرائي

Regent confers medal upon Saudi Border Guards chief

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Tuesday received at the Royal Court Chief of the Saudi Border Guards, Major General Talal Ben Muhsen Anqawi. The Regent conferred upon Maj. Gen. Anqawi Al Istihqaaq Medal of the First Order. Attending the audience were Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabneh and HRH Prince Abdullah.

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Iran, Iraq exchange remains of soldiers

TEHRAN (R) — Iran and Iraq on Tuesday exchanged the remains of more than 330 soldiers killed in their 1980-88 war, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported. It said the bodies of 121 Iranians were exchanged for those of 213 Iraqis at the Shalamcheh border post in southwest Iran. Meanwhile the heads of the two countries' "committees organising the search for those missing in action met on board a vessel near the Iranian port of Ahvaz to coordinate efforts, the agency said. Iranian and Iraqi teams combing the former war zones have found tens of thousands of bodies since a United Nations-sponsored ceasefire halted the war.

Hostages' severed heads found in Chechnya

DOVYDENKO (R) — The severed heads of three Britons and a New Zealander kidnapped by Chechen gunmen were discovered in a sack on a deserted highway in the breakaway Russian region Tuesday. Chechen militiamen prevented journalists from filming the scene amid barren wintry fields three kilometres from the western village of Dovydanko near the dusty town of Abkhaz Martan. The four men — Britons Darren Hickley, Rudolf Petschi and Peter Kennedy and New Zealander Stanley Shaw — were captured by unknown gunmen on Oct. 3 in the Chechen capital, Grozny, where they were installing a mobile phone system. It was the first time foreign hostages had been murdered since the end of Chechnya's 1994-96 war with Russia.

Yemen arrests nine in German kidnap case

SANAA (AFP) — Yemeni authorities have arrested nine people from the tribe that kidnapped a group of German tourists, in a bid to secure their release, tribal and police sources said Tuesday. The arrests included elders from the Bani Dhabian tribe that kidnapped the three German women and a man on Sunday. An official from Yemen's tourist board told AFP that police had given the tribe just 24 hours to release the tourists. Sanaa Governor Najib Abdullah Sufi has been sent to negotiate with the tribesmen. The tourists were kidnapped near the village of Yefleh, 80 kilometres south of the capital. They were returning to Sanaa after a trip, the sources said, and they did not know what happened to their driver and interpreter.

Italy, Turkey to smooth ties pending ruling

BRUSSELS (R) — NATO allies Italy and Turkey agreed on Tuesday to smooth their troubled relations pending a decision by an Italian court on the fate of Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish guerrilla leader held in Italy. Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini said after meeting his Turkish counterpart Ismail Cem in Brussels: "We have worked together with Mr Cem to ease tensions... and to get a better understanding of the position Italy has taken; and to therefore come back to the climate that existed between the two countries — to the extent possible — before the Ocalan case."

Netanyahu tells Ross next W. Bank withdrawal unlikely

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross Tuesday that he was unlikely to carry out a promised West Bank withdrawal next week despite a visit by President Bill Clinton to save the latest Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

During some two hours of talks immediately after Ross' arrival, Netanyahu justified his government's decision to freeze implementation of the Wye River land-for-security agreement in response to alleged Palestinian violations of the six-week-old deal.

"So far there's nothing to indicate the Palestinians are fulfilling their obligations, so who on earth is expecting me to give up more land?" Netanyahu said following the meeting.

He accused Palestinian National Authority (PNA) leader Yasser Arafat of "organising violent demonstrations against Israelis" to press for the release of Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli jails and of vowing to proclaim an independent state "in violation of the agreement."

"I respect the Wye agreement, but given the multiple, grave violations, how can I give up land at this time," he said.

"After this meeting with Dennis Ross, I'm sure the U.S. realises how serious Israel is about Palestinian compliance with the agreement," he said.

Over the past two weeks, Palestinians have clashed almost daily with Israeli security forces and stoned Israeli civilians in protest over Netanyahu's refusal to include political detainees among 750 Palestinian prisoners Israel is required to release under the Wye accord.

In response to reporters' questions, Ross backed Netanyahu by saying the Wye accord allowed Israel to choose which prisoners to free and he criticised the use of violence on the Palestinian side.

"The prime minister to fact has been doing on this issue what he said he would do," Ross said.

"If you have differences on any issue, the place to deal with them is at the negotiating table. There is no place for violence," he said.

Netanyahu, Ross was due to meet in the West Bank city of Ramallah with Arafat, who earlier in the day appealed to the United States to save the Wye accord from Israeli backsliding.

"Israeli threats not to implement the withdrawals and the attempts to make Clinton's visit a failure and escalate tensions are not acceptable," said Arafat spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeina.

"We ask the U.S. administration to do all it can to guarantee the complete implementation of the Wye agreement," he told AFP.

Clinton is due to arrive early Sunday for an historic three-day visit that will feature the first trip by a U.S. president to the territories ruled by Arafat's PNA.

In a show of equanimity which has angered Netanyahu's government, Clinton will spend Sunday in Jerusalem and Monday in Gaza followed by a half day of sightseeing Tuesday in Palestinian-ruled Bethlehem and then Masada, "scene of a battle symbolic of Jewish courage and defiance."

Government officials also expressed concern if Clinton would pressure Netanyahu to carry out the second of three West Bank pullbacks required by the Wye deal and scheduled for Dec. 18.

But Ross defended Clinton's trip, saying his promise to attend the Gaza meeting of Palestinian leadership was part of the Wye accord.

"Secondly, it's logical for him to come at a time when the agreement is in difficulty," he said.

After his talks with

Palestinian prisoners step up hunger strike

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners to Israeli jails intensified on Tuesday after more than 260 detainees joined a week-old protest against Israel's refusal to release security prisoners, Palestinian officials said.

In unrest sparked by Palestinian anger over the continued detention, clashes erupted in Al Ram, near Arab east Jerusalem, between Israeli soldiers and stone-throwing Palestinian students.

The army responded by firing tear gas inside their school, witnesses said.

Palestinian officials said the number of inmates on hunger strike at Meggido prison had risen from four to about 270 on Tuesday and that a total of nearly 2,000 prisoners were refusing food at Israeli jails.

Palestinian prisoners plan "an overall strike" on Dec. 11, a day before U.S. President Bill Clinton begins a visit to Israel and Palestinian-ruled areas, one of the officials said.

A senior Palestinian peace negotiator said a family member has been pronounced clinically dead after being shot in the head by Israeli troops on Monday during protests in the West Bank.

The negotiator, Saeb Erekat, said 20-year-old Nasser Erekat had not been throwing rocks at soldiers when he was shot in the Palestinian town of Abu Dis.

"He was shot by the army while he was on the rooftop

of his house trying to bring down his younger brother," Erekat told Reuters.

"Doctors told me today that Nasser is clinically dead. I hold the government of [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu responsible for the escalation against the Palestinian people and for suspending peace moves," he said.

"On top of that, the soldiers entered the house and brutally beat up my uncle — his father — who now has four stitches near his eye," Erekat said.

Asked about the shooting, Netanyahu adviser David Bar-Ilan said: "The prime minister has told me, and I think he conveyed it to Mr. Erekat as well, that he is heartbroken over the very critical injury suffered by Erekat's [relative]."

"The point is that whoever starts riots is the one who is to blame for all injuries caused by the riot," Bar-Ilan said.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and chief Israeli peace negotiator Danny Navch telephoned Erekat to express their sympathy, a relative said.

At least 50 Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli soldiers on Monday. Four Israeli border policemen and two Israeli civilians were also injured in the violence, the Israeli army said.

Israel denies Palestinian contentions that it agreed at the U.S. Middle East summit in October to free political prisoners.

Clinton to go ahead with Mideast visit

By Caroline Faraj in Brussels

U.S. SECRETARY OF State Madeleine Albright on Tuesday stressed that President Clinton would go ahead with a controversial trip to the Middle East and urged Israel and the Palestinian National Authority to honour their commitments spelled out in the Wye River agreement signed in October.

"I've been in touch with both sides making it clear that it is important for the Palestinians to live up to their obligations in terms of taking care of the security situation and to do what they are obliged to do, and also with the Israelis not to add conditions," Albright told a press conference after a NATO meeting in Brussels.

"We all know that the Middle East peace process is at a very difficult (stage) and that there are bombs on the road but we expect obligations that were agreed on both sides to be respected," she said, adding that U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross is in the region now and "we hope to get solutions to the problem."

She was referring to a statement by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that it was unlikely for Israel to carry out a pledged West Bank pullback next week as provided for by the Wye River land-for-security deal (see story above).

Despite the complications in the implementation of the deal, Albright said Clinton would make the December 12-15 journey to the Middle East because it was part of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement reached in October after intensive U.S. mediation, dismissing statements saying Israel was trying to persuade Clinton to postpone his visit.

She said Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon had told her on Monday that the president was welcome to visit.

"The visit was part of the Wye agreement, in order to sort out how the agreement will be implemented; so the president was welcomed by both parties and he is looking forward for this important trip," she said.

Asked about the Palestinian National Council meeting before the presidential visit, she said: "The expectations according to the Wye agreement, is that there will be changes in paragraphs in the PNC Charter that are anti-Israeli and that is what is going to happen."

Regarding the U.S. role in the final status negotiations she pointed out: "We'll have a role like in the past, and whatever the parties would like to have in the various parts of the Middle East negotiations, we had an active role in all peace negotiations, and regarding our role in the final status negotiations, they are as desired by both parties."

Albright said the U.S. hopes to "energise" other tracks of negotiations "and make sure that the Syrian and Lebanese tracks would be activated in order to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East."



PREPARING FOR CLINTON'S VISIT: A masked anti-terrorist Palestinian police unit conducts a drill at the Arafat Police Academy in Gaza on Tuesday. The drill was conducted in front of a weapons collection team meeting between Palestinian police and an American security team in preparation for a visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton to the Gaza Strip (Reuters photo)

Regent, Fatchett discuss Middle East peace, Iraq

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli Wye River Memorandum and the situation in Iraq were the focus of talks HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, held Tuesday with British MP Derek Fatchett, minister of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Jordan and Britain agree that Israel must implement all commitments it took under the Oct. 23 Wye River deal without introducing new conditions, Fatchett said last night before departing from Amman at the end of a 24-hour visit to the Kingdom.

"We want to see the commitments that both sides have made under the Wye agreement carried out," he said.

"We feel that the security commitments [made under the deal by the Palestinians] are being carried out, and our view so far is that it is very promising that the Palestinian Charter changes will take place."

"We therefore hope and expect the process to move

forward," Fatchett told reporters gathered at Queen Alia International Airport.

He described yesterday's statement by an Israeli official that a further Israeli troop redeployment, scheduled under the deal for next week, was unlikely to take place as "inappropriate," (see related story).

"What we must not do is introducing new conditions that are not part of the signed agreement," Fatchett said.

He stressed that Jordan's strategic interests in some of the issues to be tackled during Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on final status must be recognised.

"I also recognise that Jordan has a very keen interest in many issues in the final status negotiations, such as refugees, the status of Jerusalem, water, and others," Fatchett said.

"Jordan has a very direct involvement in those issues and when we get to final status talks on those issues Jordan's involvement has to be recognised."

On Iraq, he said Jordan and Great Britain shared the same view that Baghdad must com-

ply with U.N. resolutions and destroy its weapons of mass destruction, "which pose a threat not only to the Iraqi people, but the region as a whole."

Separate meetings with the Regent and senior officials concluded that the two countries will establish as of the new year a pattern of regular contacts between officials at various levels, Fatchett said, in order to make the already close bilateral ties "better still."

In talks with Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on Tuesday, Fatchett conveyed his country's great appreciation and gratitude for the role played by His Majesty King Hussein in the negotiations that led to the Wye deal.

Late Monday, the British minister of state held talks with Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib.

Before departing to Damascus, where he said he will work for the resumption of talks on the Syrian-Israeli track of the Middle East peace process, Fatchett also visited Pera and the Hiteen refugee camp, north of Amman.

Lebanon vows to keep fighting

BEIRUT (R) — Defence Minister Ghazi Zeater vowed on Tuesday to continue battling Israel's "bizarre and arrogant" 30-year-old occupation of south Lebanon.

Zeater, who took office on Monday, told reporters the armed forces would support the guerrilla groups fighting Israel and would coordinate with Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon with 35,000 troops stationed there.

"Israel will always remain our enemy, the aggressor against our south and against all Arab lands, the bizarre and arrogant force we will always be ready to strike at," Zeater said.

"We have identified our enemy as Israel and our brother

as Syria, with whom we will continue to coordinate on military and security issues," he added. "We will strengthen our army to counter any Israeli aggression."

Zeater's comments echoed former army commander and Lebanese President Emile Lahoud's policy on the south, the last Arab-Israeli frontier where fighting is taking place.

Lebanon is officially at war with Israel, which occupies 10 per cent of the country. The Jewish state has controlled several parts of south Lebanon since 1978 in addition to a 15-kilometre deep so-called "security zone" it set up in 1985 to protect its borders against guerrilla attacks.

The pro-Iranian Hizbollah

and other guerrilla groups are fighting to oust Israel and its local South Lebanon Army militia allies from the area. Twenty Israeli soldiers have been killed and 93 wounded in the conflict so far this year.

The rising death toll has prompted Israel to review its military presence in the area.

Some Israeli officials have proposed attacking Lebanon's infrastructure every time an Israeli is hurt. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he is ready to withdraw from the area provided the Lebanese government guarantees an end to the guerrilla war.

Beirut and Syria have refused any conditional Israeli pullback.

No arms inspections unless crippling sanctions lifted, Iraq warns

MOSCOW (AFP) — U.N. arms inspectors will not be allowed to work in Iraq unless crippling economic sanctions against Baghdad are lifted, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz warned Tuesday. At a press conference here a defiant Iraqi envoy also accused U.N. weapons inspection teams of fabricating evidence, manufacturing crises with the United Nations and of actively spying for Washington and London.

"If they want the (U.N.) Special Commission (UNSCOM) to continue their inspections, the Americans must decide to stop sanctions against Iraq," said Aziz, who earlier met Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov. "If they insist on the sanctions, they must expect that the special commission will no longer work in Iraq," Aziz said.

U.N. arms experts on Tuesday resumed spot checks on Iraqi sites, inspections the United Nations insists are a prerequisite to the lifting of sanctions, including an oil embargo, slapped on the country when it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Washington and London have warned that they remain ready to use military force against Baghdad to ensure full access for the inspectors, while

Moscow says Baghdad has complied with U.N. resolutions and that sanctions should be lifted.

On Monday Moscow said it expected sanctions would be eased soon.

"The Americans don't want sanctions against Iraq lifted because they want the regime overthrown," Aziz charged. "The special commission is deliberately slowing down its work, making forgeries and

inventing crises at each stage.

"Moreover, it is spying for the United States and Britain," Iraq's deputy premier said.

"I told Russia that our decision to continue to cooperate with the commission was not due to American threats but the results of the mediation efforts of Boris Yeltsin, Kofi Annan and other countries," the Iraqi official said referring to the Russian president and U.N. secretary general.

"We are told that inspections could commence at the beginning of January. When they do start, we will see whether it is an efficient operation or whether it is a political game aimed at maintaining sanctions against Iraq."

However, it was unclear whether he had been accurately translated from Arabic into Russian, as Interfax news agency quoted Aziz as referring to a comprehensive

review of Iraqi compliance with U.N. resolutions planned for January.

Aziz reinforced the message later, telling future Russian diplomats that "we are urging Russia to assume a firm position in the United Nations and tell the members of the Security Council that Iraq has already honoured its commitments before the world community," Interfax quoted him as saying.

In response to government's criticism of rights report **Euro-Med group remains 'deeply concerned'** **over freedom of expression in Jordan**

representative body of members of the said groups to come to Jordan, read first-hand the accurate translation of the law, listen to the government's point of view and assess the reality of the press sector and newspaper coverage in Jordan today, then draw a conclusion."

Opposition deputies are thought to be spearheading the effort but they claim to enjoy broad support in the conservative House. However, they declined to name any other colleagues involved to avoid "scuttling" the effort.

Lahham, UNICEF special ambassador for child rights in Syria, will visit the city on Thursday morning Dec. 10). The photography exhibition "Empreintes" will be part of a photography trip from Morocco to Lebanon, which will end at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Marjayoun, until Dec. 17.

U.S. clashes with European allies over NATO strategy

BRUSSELS (AFP) — NATO's attempt to define a new role for itself for the 21st century suffered a setback Tuesday as the United States clashed with its European allies over nuclear strategy and plans to significantly broaden the alliance's role.

At talks here, foreign ministers from the 16 allied countries agreed to maintain their 30,000 strong peace-keeping force in Bosnia for another six months.

But they made little progress towards narrowing differences over U.S. proposals for a new NATO "strategic concept" which would authorise the alliance to become involved in tasks such as the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or over German demands for a fundamental rethink of the alliance's nuclear doctrine.

The new concept is due to be approved at NATO's 50th anniversary summit in Washington in April, when the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, whose foreign ministers attended Tuesday's meeting, will be formally brought into the alliance.

The United States is pushing for the revised mission statement to include a commitment to NATO developing the capacity to react to crisis with "implications for the defence of common interest".

The initiative has created unease among the European allies that Washington

wants to use this broad mandate to push NATO, originally established with the sole aim of committing its members to the collective defence of their national territories, into the role of global policeman.

This interpretation was denounced as "hogwash" by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who insisted that Washington had no intention of trying to create a "globalised NATO".

The European allies are also wary of agreeing to a statement that could be used by the United States as a pretext for resorting to military action without any reference to United Nations.

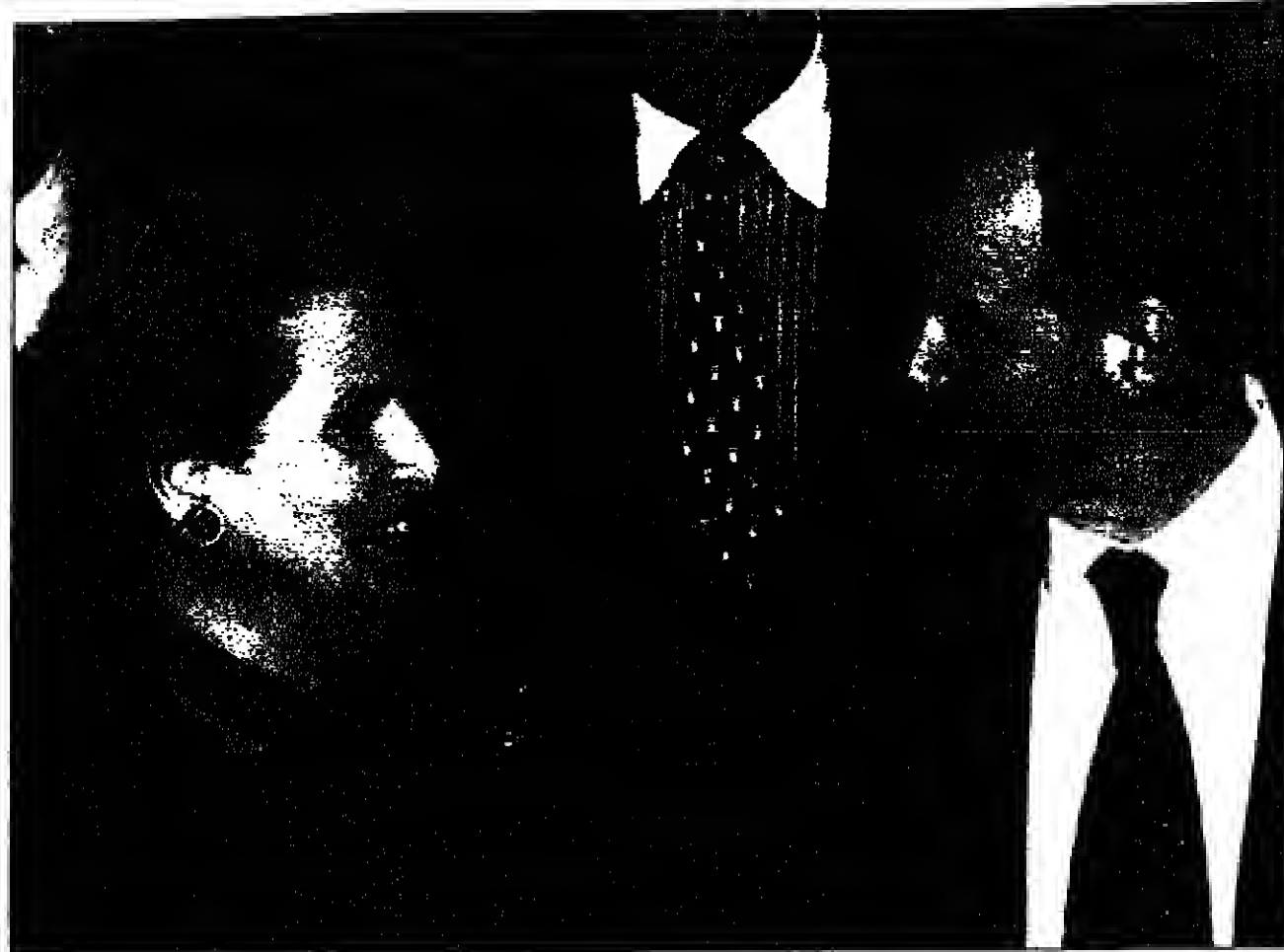
French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine warned Tuesday that the U.S. proposal to broaden the definition of NATO's fundamental tasks, "risks diluting the alliance and dividing the alliance".

Missions involving the use of force must be "placed under the authority of the U.N.", he insisted.

Albright said that NATO would continue acting in accordance with the U.N. charter but instead the alliance had to retain the right to bypass the Security Council on a "case by case basis".

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook also distanced himself from the U.S. proposals, saying NATO could not take on "unlimited commitment".

NATO must retain the



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (left) talks to British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (right) during a family photo at NATO headquarters in Brussels. NATO foreign ministers, who met to discuss the Balkans and draft a new strategic concept, said the security situation in Kosovo remained of great concern to NATO (Reuters photo)

"flexibility to respond to the real problems we recognise as real challenges to our security," Cook said. "But equally, of course, that cannot be a purely open-ended commitment. We cannot have an unlimited commitment for NATO."

U.S. officials argue that the struggle to prevent chemical and biological weapons falling into the wrong hands is crucial to Western security.

Washington is also reluctant, when it comes to responding to crises, to have its hands tied by the U.N. Security Council, where both China and Russia have

a veto.

At the height of the crisis in Kosovo in October, NATO made it clear it was willing to launch punitive airstrikes without a mandate from the U.N. Security Council.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said such tactic could only be used exceptionally. "It cannot become the rule,"

Fischer also launched a veiled attack on U.S. attempts to force the new German government to drop its demands for an alliance commitment to no force use of nuclear missiles.

"In the past, reflection has

never been banned at NATO. That has been one of the alliance's strengths and it should remain so," he said.

Germany's call for a fundamental rethink of NATO nuclear doctrine has been given a frosty reception in the United States. It has also been cold-shouldered by Britain and France, the alliances other nuclear powers.

Cook said Britain had recently confirmed its commitment to NATO's existing nuclear posture. "We see no reason for a change in that posture."

On Bosnia, the decision to

maintain the current troop numbers of the NATO-led stabilisation force (SFOR) reflected concern that progress towards lasting peace in the country was stagnating.

"There is still much to be done to reinforce the fragile democracy taking root in Bosnia," the minister said in his statement, although they warned that Western troops could not be kept on indefinitely.

France's Vedrine said: "Progress towards a multi-ethnic, democratic Bosnia has become stalled. That is why we have had to maintain the level of the force."

NEWS IN BRIEF

China executes three drug smugglers in southern Guangdong

BEIJING (AFP) — Three convicted drug smugglers have been executed in southern Guangdong province after a court upheld a previous sentence, the official Xinhua news agency reported Tuesday. The three men, Huang Sheng, Xu Tao and Lin He were detained by marine police in April after being caught smuggling 219 boxes of narcotics, weighing 4,354 tonnes, into China through Guangdong. Eleven other Chinese involved in the smuggling ring were variously handed death sentences with two-year reprieves, life imprisonment or multi-year sentences, the report said, without giving further details. The trio were executed on the same day the Higher People's Court dismissed their appeal.

'Pearl Harbour attack unforgettable'

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, making a pledge for world peace, Tuesday marked the 57th anniversary of Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, describing it as "unforgettable." "It is an unforgettable event not only for the Japanese but also for all human beings," Obuchi was quoted by Jiji Press as telling reporters. "I want to express my recognition of the importance of the past and my hope, as a Japanese, to contribute to the world peace in the future," the Japanese premier said. Japan attacked the U.S. harbor in Hawaii on Dec. 8, 1941, triggering its entry into World War II, which brought subsequent attacks across several Asian countries.

Former dictator Duvalier missing for a year in France

PARIS (AFP) — Haiti's former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, blamed for the murder of thousands of opponents during his 15-year rule, has been missing in France for a year and authorities believe he is sick, destitute and homeless. Duvalier, known as "Baby Doc", disappeared after the death of his mother a year ago in a clinic in a Paris suburb, an interior ministry source said Tuesday. The source said the 47-year-old former strongman was sick and without funds and was probably living the life of a homeless tramp. The question of Duvalier's fate was raised following the October arrest of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in Britain. Spain allegedly committed during his 17-year military rule in Chile. Spokesman Francois Rivasseau said the foreign ministry had no information of Jean-Claude Duvalier's whereabouts in France. He said Duvalier did not have political refugee status in France, despite requesting asylum following his arrival in 1986. Neither an extradition request nor an arrest warrant has been issued for Duvalier, he said. Meanwhile, Haitian exiles in France have demanded that the former dictator face trial for crimes against humanity. France-Info radio reported Tuesday, Franco-Haitian poet Gerald Boncourt, who helped set up a committee of exiles to press for Duvalier's trial, was quoted as saying: "All murderers must pay for their crimes." Duvalier was named president for life after the death of his father Francois, "Papa Doc", in 1971. He fled Haiti in February 1986 amid accusations that he was responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of his opponents during his rule. He is believed to have arrived in France with \$200 million. However, the left-leaning daily Liberation reported Tuesday that Duvalier was living the life of a tramp in the south of France. Meanwhile, Duvalier's lawyer, Sylvain Vaisse, told French television he had seen his client two weeks ago in France and spoken to him by telephone Monday. "To my knowledge he is still in France," Vaisse told France 2. Vaisse denied Duvalier's disappearance had anything to do with fresh demands for his trial after the arrest of Pinochet. The French authorities believe Duvalier is living rough in the same way as Charlesomane Bokassa, the 28-year-old son of former Central African Republic dictator Jean-Bedel Bokassa. Bokassa, homeless and destitute, was interviewed last month about his solitary life wandering the streets and metro stations of Paris.

4 killed, 15 injured in U.K. coach collision

MEASHAM, England (AFP) — Four people were killed and 15 others injured late Monday in a collision involving a minibus and a truck on a main road near Measham, central England, an ambulance service spokesman said. Leicestershire Ambulance Service said the minibus, containing all male adults, was believed to be on the way to a football match when it was in an accident with a heavy goods vehicle. All four dead had been in the minibus. At least two of the injured were said to be a "serious" condition in four hospitals in the region. One witness described the accident scene as a "scrapyard".

Astronomers think there may be 'hidden planets' in the universe

MUNICH (DPA) — Astronomers believe there may be large, as yet undiscovered, planets around 25 to 30 billion kilometres out in the universe. They have been led to this conclusion, European Southern Observatory (ESO) astronomer Richard West explained, by the discovery of a series of small planets, observed with the aid of the new VLT telescope at the ESO base in Chile. Experts have known for the past six years of the existence of these minor bodies, measuring up to 100 kilometres in diameter. They are remnants of the birth of a planet, far enough away from the sun to have been preserved "as in a refrigerator," said West. The new, extremely powerful telescope will make it possible to explore the surface of these minor bodies. The focus of interest is whether, in addition to ice and dust, it will be possible to identify organic molecules there, something nobody has so far succeeded in doing. The scientists hope that the minor bodies will provide them with further clues as to how the solar system emerged. Observation is being concentrated on the Kuiper Belt, stretching across a distance of between five and 30 kilometres from Earth. So far, around 10,000 minor bodies have been catalogued in this region, 70 of them at its utmost extremity. However, experts suspect there may be more than 100,000 such planets, including "hidden objects" between 1,000 and 2,000 kilometres in diameter, said West. Earth is 12,800 kilometres in diameter.

Two policemen killed in Abkhazia

MOSCOW (AFP) — Two policemen in the Gali region of Abkhazia — a breakaway region of northwest Georgia — were killed Monday and two more were wounded when they were ambushed by a group armed with grenades and submachine guns. ITAR-TASS reported. The head of the Abkhazian security services, Astanur Tarba, quoted by ITAR-TASS said it was believed the attackers came from Georgia and that the operation was carefully planned. Gali has been controlled by Abkhazian forces the end of a civil war in 1992 and 1993. The two sides are currently engaged in talks to reach a definitive settlement to the six-year-old conflict which still smoulders despite a ceasefire concluded in 1994. Monday, an Abkhazian leader accused Georgia of seeking to undermine the negotiations by trying to modify already agreed prepared on the return of refugees to Gali district. Abkhazian whose population is mainly Muslim, unilaterally proclaimed independence in 1992.

Aspirin found to increase risk of brain haemorrhage

CHICAGO (AFP) — Aspirin use raises the risk of haemorrhagic stroke but its overall benefit in curbing the risk of heart attack may outweigh its adverse effects, according to a study by researchers in New Orleans.

Jiang He and colleagues at Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in New Orleans reached the conclusion after reviewing data from 16 controlled trials of preventive aspirin therapy involving 55,462 patients.

Brain haemorrhages account for about 15 per cent of all strokes. The rest are ischemic strokes, in which blockage in an artery deprives the brain of blood flow and oxygen.

The study was published in the latest issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association.

It said many large, randomised, controlled clinical trials had shown that aspirin treatment cuts

the risk of ischemic stroke and subsequent heart attacks among patients with a wide range of pre-existing cardiovascular diseases.

"These results indicate that aspirin therapy increases the risk of haemorrhagic stroke," the authors wrote.

"However, the overall benefit of aspirin use on myocardial infarction and ischemic stroke may outweigh its adverse effects on risk of haemorrhagic stroke in most populations," they wrote.

They urged that aspirin be used with caution among people who are at high risk of haemorrhagic stroke.

The researchers also found that, on average, aspirin therapy was linked to a 15 per cent reduction in the death rate from all causes; a 16 per cent cut in the cardiovascular death rate; a 22 per cent reduction in fatal heart attacks; and a 12 per cent reduction in total stroke.

Blair in fresh Northern Ireland talks after IRA meeting

LONDON (AFP) — Prime Minister Tony Blair was set to launch a new round of talks on the Northern Ireland peace process Tuesday amid reports that the IRA may be about to make a move on disarmament.

Blair was to meet Ulster Unionist deputy leader John Taylor later Tuesday, and SDLP number two Seamus Mallon and Sinn Fein negotiator Martin McGuinness Wednesday, all at Downing Street.

It follows a top-level conference by Irish Republican Army (IRA) leaders at the weekend which, according to some reports emerging from Dublin, may herald an announcement on disarmament.

The question of decommissioning paramilitary weapons has been the biggest stumbling block to implementing Northern Ireland's April 10 peace accord.

Protestant Unionists insist the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein cannot sit on a power-sharing government, which will be granted full power in February, until the paramilitary group has

made a start on disarmament.

Sinn Fein insists its place is not conditional on any paramilitary action. As a result, the province's new administration has yet to be set up.

Thursday, Unionist leader David Trimble, the province's First Minister, and SDLP chief John Hume will pick up this year's Nobel peace prize for their part in sealing the accord.

Meanwhile, security sources said some 60 to 70 senior IRA activists met in Ireland, near the border with Northern Ireland, at the weekend.

There were conflicting reports on the outcome of the meeting, but it would certainly have concentrated on the continuing ceasefire, the question of arms and prospects of a satisfactory settlement.

Ireland's highest selling newspaper, the Irish Independent, led its front page with a story headlined "Provos now ready to destroy Semtex".

It said a gesture on destroying some explosives hinges on a satisfactory outcome to talks in Belfast,

with Sinn Fein handed two cabinet positions on the new executive.

However the report said the meeting "did not take a formal decision on the decommissioning issue" and that a bandover of weapons had been ruled out.

The paper speculated that it may need a further IRA convention to sanction any recommendation on decommissioning.

Another paper, the Examiner, claimed the IRA agreed to start a handover of weapons.

Citing unnamed sources, it said it understood agreement was made over the token disposal of a quantity of commercial explosives.

But the Irish Times quoted republican sources "strongly denying" that the IRA leadership was considering decommissioning of weapons to facilitate Sinn Fein's entry into the executive.

It quoted sources rejecting suggestions that the organisation "was likely to engage in even a partial handover or destruction of arms or explosives."

The IRA itself has made no public pronouncement

on disarmament since late April, when it said the accord was a "significant development" but fell short of providing a basis for a lasting settlement or weapons handover.

Blair held a 15-minute telephone conversation with his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern Monday. They plan to contact the province's various parties over the next few days in a bid to force progress before Christmas.

In a separate development, the IRA appealed Tuesday for help to find the bodies of people it murdered in the early 1970s and buried in secret graves.

The IRA, in a statement to the Belfast daily the Irish News, urged anyone with information about the whereabouts of the graves to contact them or the victims' families.

It is thought about 20 people were murdered and buried in unmarked graves in and around Belfast in the 1970s. Calls for the IRA to reveal the location of the graves had intensified since the accord as part of the process towards reconciliation.

Pressure over Pinochet rises as Law Lord's link to Amnesty revealed

LONDON (AFP) — Pressure on the British government to free Augusto Pinochet increased Tuesday as one of the Law Lords who ruled he should face extradition to Spain was reported to be linked to Amnesty International.

As a delegation arrived from Chile to petition for the former dictator's release, The Guardian newspaper said Lord Hoffman had been a director of a charity affiliated to the human rights group for seven years.

It added that Amnesty had admitted that Hoffman was one of two directors of the fund-raising Amnesty International Charity, in a letter to Pinochet's lawyers.

The organisation insisted that Hoffman's work was unrelated to its campaign to have Pinochet extradited to Spain to face trial on

charges of terrorism, torture and genocide.

Nevertheless, the revelation could not have come at a worse time for those campaigning for the 83-year-old's extradition.

Already, lawyers for Pinochet are reported to have asked for Pinochet's release on the grounds that Hoffman's wife is an administrative assistant for Amnesty in London.

And on Tuesday, a Chilean delegation, including wives of soldiers killed under Pinochet's command when he overthrew leftist President Salvador Allende in 1973, will hand in a petition to Prime Minister Tony Blair's office.

British Home Secretary Jack Straw must decide by

Hoffman, a 64-year-old South African emigrant, was among the Law Lords who decided by a 3-2 majority last month that Pinochet was not immune from proceedings as a former head of state, as his lawyers argued.

During the House of Lords hearing, Amnesty was one of the most vociferous of those arguing that there were no grounds for immunity in international law.

A spokesman for Amnesty was quoted in The Guardian as saying it was a matter of public record that Hoffman held an unpaid position with it.

He pointed out that Lord Bingham, the High Court judge who ruled that Pinochet was immune from prosecution and whose judgment the Law Lords overturned, also worked for

"If Pinochet's team are raising this now it is a sign of how desperate they have become," he told the paper.

Meanwhile, the Chilean delegation in London was making much of their petition, which they say is signed by 200,000 Chileans.

Afterwards it is handed in, the group will hand a letter signed by 50 Chilean deputies to Straw.

Late Monday, Chilean deputy Dario Pava, who helped arrange the pro-Pinochet visit, said: "Every man, woman and child in Chile today wants to forgive the past and protect our democracy."

Describing Pinochet's coup as a "civil war," he added: "Soldiers, policemen and civilians were killed on both sides."

Pinochet, 83, who was arrested in London on Oct.

16, is currently under house arrest at a secluded mansion on a private estate west of the capital.

He is due to appear at Bow Street magistrates' court in central London Friday.

Then, according to the Home Office, the case will either be formally ended or, if Straw decides it should proceed, the court will look again at his bail conditions.

Straw could announce his decision before then. He has let it be known he will not be influenced by anyone, not even Blair.

He can allow Pinochet to go home on compassionate grounds, although the senator was told last week he was well enough to leave the clinic where he had been residing, or if his think his alleged crimes were political or the extradition request improperly made.

There have been violent demonstrations in Chile both for and against Pinochet and warnings of the damage any trial would cause to its transition to democracy.

Chilean Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza, himself an exile during the 17-year Pinochet regime, was recently despatched from Santiago to London and Madrid to plead for his release.

Straw has also been asked by Amnesty to give them advance notice of the decision, as it fears the ex-strongman would flee the country before they could challenge his release if that is what Straw decides.

More than 3,000 people were executed or disappeared under Pinochet's dictatorship, which ran from 1973 to 1990.



Greenpeace Activist Carmen Gravatt, of Greenpeace New Zealand, hangs on the mooring lines of the Japanese whaling ship, the Nisshin Maru, in Noumea, New Caledonia. Greenpeace ended a 28-hour protest Tuesday against the Japanese whaling in the Southern Oceans Sanctuary (Reuters photo)

Greenpeace ends whaler protest

NOUMEA (AFP) — Greenpeace activists Tuesday ended a protest which prevented two Japanese whaling ships from leaving port in New Caledonia, an AFP correspondent reported from the scene.

The four Greenpeace members who had chained themselves to the ships some 30 hours returned to the quayside, allowing the vessels to leave.

"It's a victory, each hour gained is one hour less for killing whales in the Antarctic," said Greenpeace activist Olivier Devaux.

The organisation had said they would not physically resist local police.

The territory's French authorities warned them Tuesday morning that they would forcibly remove the activists.

Minutes after the protest ended the whale catcher Kyo Maru and the whaling factory ship Nisshin Maru left port.

Greenpeace France said the French government had promised to ask the Japanese authorities to halt whale hunting which is officially justified by Tokyo as "scientific research."

The captains did not inform port authorities of their destination, although the Nisshin Maru was expected to head for Japan as it suffered a serious fire

at sea on Nov. 19 and was brought to New Caledonia by tug for repairs.

Greenpeace Tuesday released a letter it sent to Matsuura Koichiro, Japanese ambassador in France, calling for an immediate halt to whaling in the 1998-99 season in the Antarctic.

It bitterly criticised Japanese claims that the whale hunt was for scientific reasons, saying it was "absolutely unnecessary for the management of whale populations in this region."

The International Whaling Commission declared the Antarctic a whale sanctuary for 10 years from 1994, and Japan is the only country

not to have respected it.

Greenpeace estimates that Japanese whalers killed 440 of the mammals there this year for "scientific" reasons and then sold the meat for \$50 million.

Australia and New Zealand, which refused to allow the damaged ship to dock, want the entire southern hemisphere to be a whale sanctuary to complement existing sanctuaries in the Southern and Indian Oceans.

Tokyo, a major aid donor to South Pacific nations, opposes the move, and says whaling has a unique social and cultural significance in Japan.

Yeltsin fires most of his top aides

MOSCOW (AP) — Boris Yeltsin, And how, Russia's president, Boris Yeltsin, dismissed most of his top aides during a quick trip to the Kremlin.

The Russian president immediately returned to the government hospital where he has been for the past two weeks. Aides told the Associated Press the president was continuing treatment for pneumonia.

Yeltsin dismissed Chief of Staff Valentin Yumashev and his deputies Yuri Voronov, Mikhail Komissar and Yevgeny Savostyanov.

Kremlin spokesman said, Nikolai Bordyuzha, secretary of the presidential security council, was appointed new chief of staff, while the other posts

remained vacant.

Bordyuzha will serve in both posts, the AP said.

The Kremlin had no immediate comment on the sudden dismissals.

Yeltsin has a habit of unexpected and often unexplained firings. The latest round of sackings could reflect his unhappiness over the way some aides handled his recent hospitalisation and their unusual candidness about the president's health.

The Russian media has said that the passive and defeatist aides were further eroding Yeltsin's power. The dismissed aides handled the workings of the Kremlin and the president's routine and had considerable influence.

Yumashev and other

Kremlin aides had openly called Yeltsin too weak to make foreign trips or to handle daily affairs of state and suggested he leave economic control to Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Yeltsin today also took personal control of the Justice Ministry and tax police — two key government structures previously under Primakov's command. The move was clearly aimed at strengthening Yeltsin's authority, although its immediate implications were unclear.

Yeltsin insists he has no serious health problems and that he remains in control of the government.

Yeltsin had all but disappeared from sight when he entered a government hos-

pital Nov. 22 with pneumonia, the latest in a long string of health problems.

Despite calls for his resignation by opponents concerned about his health, Yeltsin and his doctors insist he will serve out his term, which ends in 2000.

Presidential spokesman Dmitry Yakushkin said over the weekend that Yeltsin was "still the most influential politician in the country, no matter what is said about it."

Presidential aides said last week that doctors had difficulty persuading Yeltsin to rest and recover completely. Primakov appealed to Yeltsin to stay in the hospital until he had fully recovered.

U.K. advised to allow cloning for human spare parts

LONDON (R) — Scientists advised Britain Tuesday to allow cloning research involving the use of human embryos to provide parts to treat serious illness.

In a report that sparked immediate protests from a leading pro-life group, a panel of experts supported the government's plan on human reproductive cloning but left the door open to use the technique to create cloned tissue and organs.

They said cloning techniques could be helpful in treating people with brain diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and various types of cancer in the coming years.

The idea of human reproductive cloning is not going to go anywhere in this country," Sir Colin Campbell, the chairman of the Human Genetic Advisory Commission (HGAC), said in a telephone interview.

But the research may be used to culture

cells so that they can create human tissue for skin patches and later organs that are absolutely compatible with the immune system of the recipients.

"Embryos may help us to create culture cells so we could begin to think of treatments for different diseases that have so far escaped us," he added.

The recommendations were made in a joint report by the HGAC, and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), which licenses the country's fertility clinics. The groups were invited in January to advise the government on the legal and aspects of cloning.

The cloning of human beings has been banned under British law since 1990 but news last year of the successful cloning of Dolly the sheep has sparked a debate on how to regulate the technology.

Ruth Deech, the chairwoman of HFEA, said the panel was firmly against cloning babies.

The recommended research into therapeutic cloning would involve using very young human embryos.

"The use of stem cells in particular could have a large number of potential applications and the HFEA is in contact with the department of health about the implication of this work," she said.

The pro-life charity LIFE immediately condemned the report supporting therapeutic cloning, warning that it will be the first step towards producing full-term cloned babies.

"This recommendation amounts to the promotion of a new form of technological cannibalism in which the victims are real living members of the human race," said LIFE's director Peter Garret.

"The proposed techniques will involve producing identical copies of existing people and converting them into tissues and organs for transplantation into the original donors."

Campbell dismissed such comments, saying therapeutic cloning is not about making copies of people but about doing something to tackle diseases.

"If it will save a woman's life or help us to deal with breast cancer or Alzheimer's or lung cancer, then we will encourage it to go forward and we will fund the research because it gains knowledge that will help us to benefit humankind," he said.

"If it is going to be something morally repugnant we won't allow it."

The joint report by HFEA and the HGAC, which was set up in December 1996 to advise the British government on new developments in human genetics, analysed responses to a consultation exercise on cloning earlier this year.

Up to 80 per cent of the public were against reproductive cloning.

As impeachment vote looms, Clinton lawyers present defence

WASHINGTON (AFP) — With an impeachment vote looming this week in a congressional panel, President Bill Clinton's lawyers launched a two-day defence Tuesday against ousting him over the Monica Lewinsky affair.

Clinton's attorneys opened their defence before the House Judiciary Committee after chairman Henry Hyde indicated the panel would begin debating an impeachment motion Thursday and may vote on the measure by Friday.

At 4:00 p.m. (2100 GMT) Thursday the committee will "begin consideration of a resolution containing articles of impeachment," Hyde said.

White House counsel Gregory Craig began his presentation before the committee, and was to call legal experts and historians in a bid to keep Clinton from becoming just the third U.S. president to have articles of impeachment — formal charges — voted against him.

The experts are part of a "robust" two-pronged strategy to defend Clinton from charges of wrongdoing stemming from his sexual relationship with

As impeachment vote looms, Clinton lawyers present defence

Lewinsky, a former White House intern.

The strategy, unveiled by the White House Monday, seemed to be to challenge charges in independent counsel Kenneth Starr's report to Congress on the Lewinsky affair, and argue that any misdeeds by Clinton in the affair do not warrant his ouster.

The White House said 14 legal experts and historians would come before the House Judiciary Committee in 30 hours of hearings Tuesday and Wednesday.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said the witnesses were to focus on the constitutional grounds for removing a president and would not engage in a political attack on Starr.

Clinton's lawyer Charles Ruff will also argue that impeachment is too severe a punishment for Clinton, who swore under oath that he did not have sex with Lewinsky but later admitted to an affair.

A CNN/USA Today survey published Monday showed Americans tend to agree with him; two-thirds were against impeaching the president and 37 per cent said they would prefer

Congress to take no action over the affair.

By contrast, those polled were strongly critical of the way the Republicans have handled the probe, with 61 per cent expressing disapproval.

The Republicans' 21-16 edge on the panel means Democrats have little chance to block articles, which Hyde said would broadly include perjury, obstruction of justice and abuse of power.

But lawmakers "are withholding any judgement and any final drafting until after the testimony has been received," stressed Hyde, who also renewed his vow to finish his panel's work by year's end.

The ideologically polarised panel was expected to vote at least one article stemming from Clinton's attempt to cover up his affair with Lewinsky.

Hyde has loosed a barrage of criticism at the White House's defence strategy since his inquiry began in September, saying it amounted to just "avoid the facts and attack the process."

"We haven't heard one word about evidence repu-

diating or rejecting the facts," he said, adding: "We haven't heard anybody say Monica Lewinsky is a liar."

Hyde called on Clinton lawyers to offer material that "repudiates, rejects, rebuts the facts."

If the panel approves the articles, the 435-member House could vote as early as next week, with a simple majority of those voting needed to send the charges to the Senate for trial.

Should the House approve the articles, Clinton would be the second U.S. president to be impeached.

The resignation of the disgraced President Richard Nixon in 1974 prevented the full House from considering the Judiciary Committee's charges against him.

If the measure goes to the full House — where Republicans have a 228-206 edge — lawmakers expect the vote to be very close.

Such a vote would come in a lame-duck Congress, which will end in January. The Republican majority will slip to 223-211 in January following the recent U.S. mid-term elections.

Clinton adviser urges Australia to consider life as world's nuke dump

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia should consider an international plan to become a dumping ground for the world's nuclear waste, a top adviser to U.S. President Bill Clinton said Tuesday.

Australia is in a unique position because of its geography and political stability to help the world solve the problem of where to store nuclear waste from bombs dismantled at the end of the cold war, according to Clinton's special envoy on weapons of mass destruction, Robert Gallucci.

"If Australia could appreciate the concept and decide it was in the national interest there would be enormous benefits for the world," he told The Australian newspaper.

Gallucci, dean of the prestigious Georgetown University school of foreign service, said he had met Australian Prime Minister John Howard earlier this year but said they had not discussed the issue of nuclear waste.

The Australian government has denied holding ministerial talks with the U.S. on a possible waste dump and has offered no public support for the plan, a move that would draw the immediate ire of environmentalists.

But the Clinton adviser said the White House had been briefed on an American company's proposal to establish a massive nuclear waste dump in remote parts of Australia's west and south, a plan he backed.

"I don't think the U.S. government is officially aware but there have been informal discussions about an approach to the Australian government at various levels," he told the newspaper.

"Australia could play a pretty unique role if Australia was willing to do it."

A video tape issued by Seattle-based Pangea promoting the idea of a massive Australian dump was leaked to Australian environmentalists last week, forcing the company to go public with its plans.

According to the company, only two countries in the world — Argentina and Australia — have the needed stable geography and political systems for a nuclear dump like the one it is proposing.

Anwar defence plans action against key witness

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Lawyers for sacked Malaysian deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim plan to launch proceedings Wednesday against a key witness who gave contradictory evidence about whether or not he was sodomised by his former boss.

Defence counsel Gurbachan Singh filed a motion Tuesday to take action against driver Azizhan Abu Bakar, who stunned the court Monday by admitting he was not sodomised by Anwar — reversing earlier testimony that he was repeatedly forced to have sex with him.

"What he has said in court and in the sworn statement might conflict with each other," said fellow counsel Sulaiman Abdullah, referring to the Azizhan's statement last week, that he was frequently sexually assaulted by Anwar in 1992.

Gurbachan said the team wanted to interview two witnesses who allegedly intimidated Azizhan — who was the driver of Anwar's wife Wan Azizah at the time — on Anwar's behalf.

"We need to do the application," he told reporters after Tuesday's hearing, adding that he hoped the proceedings would start Wednesday.

Anwar is on trial on four counts of corruption related to allegations he used his position to cover up accusations of sexual misconduct. He also faces a fifth corruption charge and five charges of sodomy.

The former protégé of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was fired in early September and arrested 18 days later after leading a huge anti-Mahathir rally. If convicted, he faces up to 14 years for corruption and up to 20 years plus whipping for sodomy. He has denied all the charges.

In the politically explosive trial, Azizhan also agreed he was called to a private meeting with Mahathir, where he discussed his allegations against Anwar, a week before the deputy premier was dismissed.

"The prime minister said he would ask the police to investigate the case with more depth and advised me to be more careful," he told the court.

Azizhan also denied that he had implicated Anwar in the death of his wife, who was seven months pregnant, in a car accident in January.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Bar Council said it had deferred an emergency general meeting to debate contempt proceedings against one of Anwar's nine defence lawyers.

Zaimur Zakaria was last week sentenced to three months' jail for contempt of court after he refused to apologise for filing an application seeking to eject two prosecutors from the case. He alleged

that they tried to falsely implicate Anwar in various sex offences.

The Court of Appeal later granted a stay of execution against the sentence, which had sparked anger among the legal community.

The council said it received a petition signed by 162 lawyers calling for a special meeting to discuss Zaimur's case. But it said the issue would be raised before the Court of Appeal and any action beforehand could run foul of laws preventing the discussion of matters before the court.

With a cast of colourful characters ranging from secret police agents to movie stars, ministers and a mysterious female dentist, it was only a matter of time before the film industry was drawn to the trial that is gripping Malaysia.

Tuesday, a Malaysian scriptwriter turned up to witness the dramatic courtroom drama first-hand after queuing for more than five hours for a seat in the public gallery.

"I want to get an idea for a script," said Din Hassan, who has been writing television scripts for four years.

"It's history for our country, once in a lifetime. I want to see how the lawyers turn around their witnesses, the jokes in the courtroom and, most important, how the family acts," he told AFP.

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Al Dustour's Mohammad Jeisi commented on Jordanian-Egyptian relations saying that 15 agreements are expected to be signed between the two countries when their joint committee starts its 15th meeting in Amman within the next few days. Agreements will include trade exchange, the establishing of a joint trade-industry council, cooperation on issues in customs related matters, oil, planning, management, tourism, health, investment, culture, science and legislative protocols, Jeisi explained. The two countries' relationship is notable because it is continuous and does not get affected by political changes, said the writer. This relation should be a model for all Arab countries to follow.

Some critics of the visit have sought to diminish its importance by charac-

Those of us who sought to support Palestinian rights or to call for dia-

compromises; inserting the words "Palestinian self-determination" or even "the rights of the Palestinian people" in the party's platform. These were all rejected, because we were told, acknowledging the existence of "Palestinian people" implied recognising them as a national community

I recount all of this in order to make

and for Israel withdrawal from occupied lands somewhat freed of the taboos that have inhibited our efforts for so long.

But the Palestinians would be foolish to believe for a moment that these unrecognised early gains can stem the tide of pro-Israel sympathisers here.

in the classroom. The gravity of the situation can be summarised in the statistics: Of the estimated 855 million adult functional illiterates throughout the world, two-thirds are female.

By Michael Collins

1. *Chlorophyll a* (Chl a) is the primary photosynthetic pigment in most plants and algae. It is a green pigment that absorbs light energy in the blue and red regions of the visible spectrum. Chl a is essential for the light-dependent reactions of photosynthesis, where it converts light energy into chemical energy in the form of ATP and NADPH.

24. Looking for a job

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By Max Ogi

And in a bitterly ironic twist, the weak justice system has conspired to hamper efforts by the police to bring the

The sunset girls: The Mutti-Mewse brothers film the stars of the silent movies for one more performance

By Michael Collins

AT THE HEIGHT of her career Anita Page received 35,000 fan letters a week. She starred in Broadway Melody, which won Best Picture at the first Academy Awards in 1929. The ceremony was held at the Hollywood Roosevelt, and this is where she chose to meet the Mutti-Mewse brothers for the first time.

The 26-year-old English twins have spent the past 13 years documenting the unknown lives of the silent movie stars after they drifted into obscurity with the arrival of the talkies. And Page was to provide them with a unique insight into their secret history of Hollywood.

"She arrived two hours late," Austin Mutti-Mewse says. "She told us: 'I kept Valentino waiting. I can keep you waiting.'"

The meeting between the brothers and the long-forgotten film star is reminiscent of Kenneth Tynan's first visit to the legendary Louise Brooks.

Suddenly struck with stage fright, she wrote: "There is nothing I can do about a face 50 years older than the one you have in mind." Anita Page has been a few years since her

Hollywood highs, but those around her insist on painting the face of a 21-year-old starlet and twenties flapper on the features of a nonagenarian. The make-up is thick, the wig is big. It's the pictures that got small. Her story is Sunset Boulevard made flesh.

At 94, looking like Baby Jane Hudson cast as Candy Darling, she lives a charmed, rosenet life that has faded to sepia as the years passed. Page is surrounded by a small supporting cast, headed by her sixty-something daughter and a handful of young gay men passing themselves off as young actors. They cut the bad news from her dailies before she reads them, paint and preen her for nights on the town, and leave her alone in the afternoon to watch her old films.

"It's not a tragic life," says Howard Mutti-Mewse. "She's a 94-year-old who is out almost every night of the week." Before the interview for their documentary film, *I Used To Be In Pictures*, the twins were informed that the actress would only be filmed between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. — the times when she was once expected on set.

The venue was an apartment in Coldwater Canyon used by her daughter. In the absence of an elevator, the crew had to carry their star up the stairs in a chair. "Did I ever play Jeopatra?" she asked her daughter, as she was raised in the air. "You're playing it now, mother," she was told. Immediately, she became the silent actress vamping like Norma Desmond ready to play Salome. Before Page went before the cameras again for the first time in 60 years, her daughter assured the crew: "My mother is ready for her close-up."

On film, Page is lucid and lively talking about the days when MGM claimed to have "more stars than there are in the heavens" with herself, Garbo and Crawford the brightest in the firmament. What made her a star? "I had it, honey," she says in a broad Brooklyn drawl. She talks of the parties at William Randolph Hearst's San Simeon mansion — the real-life equivalent of Citizen Kane's Xanadu — where she turned up for one night and stayed six months. Mussolini wrote her fan mail, and the silent screen's Latin lover, Ramon Novarro, was in love with her.

When Novarro died in the late sixties, Page was grief-stricken and cried for three days. According to Kenneth Anger's Hollywood Babylon, the gay actor was murdered by two male prostitutes and found with an onyx dildo — once a present from Valentino — lodged in his throat.

Page also believes Joan Crawford had a crush on her. During her first and last visit to Crawford's apartment,

her mother found something in the bathroom cabinet so shocking that she never let her daughter return and never divulged what she had seen. Perhaps it was a gift from Valentino.

During the filming of the Page sequence in the documentary, another twist began to emerge, off-camera, revealing the sleazy flipside of luxury and glamour. Austin recalls in his diary that everything in the apartment was pink, with mirrors covering the ceiling. Everywhere there were piles of softporn videos, men's business cards and Post-It notes with phone-sex dialogue scribbled on them.

The ancient, painted lady was oblivious to the vice that surrounded her, and equally oblivious to the fact that her second daughter had died in the apartment months before. Between takes, her surviving daughter would leave the room, remove her platinum Barbie wig and return, pretending to be her sister. Suddenly the plot shifted

They have spoken on the phone to Hedy Lamarr, the Vienna-born actress once described as "the most beautiful woman ever filmed." Now 85, Lamarr refuses to be seen but persists in keeping her reputation alive. She writes each year to the Motion Picture Academy requesting that she should be recognised for a Lifetime Achievement Award. The sporadic shoplifting charges which have put her name in print in recent years are reputedly her way of stoking the embers of her fame.

So why do these actresses reply to the Mutti-Mewse brothers? "The fact that we were young, English and twins became our calling card," says Howard. "Particularly when we went to Hollywood to meet some of them." Many of the actors they met were alive and kicking when D.W. Griffiths invented the close-up, but had not been in front of a camera since their halcyon days. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's

and has both a hospital and a cinema on site.

Here some of Hobart's retired contemporaries continue to ostracise her because McCarthyism cast her as the villain. This residential home, where the elderly denizens are destined to end their days, shows that ultimately Hollywood is the same as any other community. "Hollywood people are afraid to leave Hollywood," says the producer Gottfried Reinhardt, in Picture, Lillian Ross' account of Hollywood in the fifties.

"Out in the world they are frightened. They are unsure of themselves." The house is like a five-star club. From the Merle Oberon Garden to the John Ford Chapel, it is pristine and luxurious. The bell goes for lunch, a piano plays in the dining room, you walk into a sea of white hair and everyone is talking about the movies. The Louis B. Mayer theatre in the home shows the new movies as soon as the big cinemas do.

Old rivals are forced to share the same living space. Mae Clarke, who got the grapefruit pushed into her face by James Cagney in *Public Enemy*, ruled the room when she was alive. Her main rival was Hobart — they had fought over roles and politics. Every time Hobart walked past her Clarke would shout. "Next time you see her she'll have her uniform on."

Even some of the volunteer nurses are former stars. Addie McPhail, who was Mrs. (Fatty) Arbuckle III, works here. She married Arbuckle after his rape case, and helped him find work as a jobbing director under a pseudonym. Arbuckle died 65 years ago, but she still takes offence if people call him Fatty. Yet despite the names, and the extravagance of the home, there is an air of normality compared with Page's residence. This is where the old stars come to get old and eventually die — as well as the silent movie legends, Burt Lancaster, Dana Andrews and Mary Astor saw out their days here.

Another of the home's residents is one of the few men to feature in *I Used To Be In Pictures*. Unlike Page and Hobart, 87-year-old Fayard Nicholas has worked consistently in film and television as a dancer throughout his life. But he was never allowed to fulfil his potential. Tallulah Bankhead once told him: "If you had been white, you could have danced with Ginger Rogers."

As part of the dance act the Nicholas Brothers, he inspired both Gene Kelly and Michael Jackson. The brothers' big screen moment came with their appearance in *Down Argentine Way*, but their names were absent from the credits on the posters.

"They received their credits eventually," says Austin, "because the public loved their dance sequences so much that certain cinemas rewound the film to repeat their scenes." For many of the characters featured in *I Used To Be In Pictures*, fame remains the spur. They willfully admit to waiting in the wings, getting ready for their big close-up, before the final curtain falls. Their hopes have been raised by the success that brightened the late Jessica Tandy's Indian summer in the wake of *Driving Miss Daisy* and the resurrection of Gloria Stuart's career in *Titanic*, resulting in a best supporting actress Oscar nomination.

The Mutti-Mewse brothers talk about the day they heard from their friend Gloria. She had just received a phone call asking if she fancied playing a part in a new movie. That's very nice of you, she told the casting agent, but do you realise I've not been in a film for 50 years. Stuart asked the boys for their advice — had they heard of the film-maker James Cameron, who was planning to make a movie called *Titanic*? The brothers told her that Cameron was a fine filmmaker. Stuart grasped the nettle, and the film has broken every box-office record.

"He always took his dates to see boats or planes, and places where there was loud machinery," she says in the documentary. "That way everyone would have to shout." Now 94, she is a resident at the Motion Picture & Television Country House, which provides a home for several hundred former actors, now in their twilight years.



'I saw Gorbachev at a party in 1985,' says Joy Hodges. 'I went right over to him and said, Gorbachev take down that wall. And he did'

It is not just the Mutti-Mewses who have sought out these legends. The younger kids on the block are also beginning to look to their Hollywood elders as idols. In recent years, Warren Beatty was to be found at The Motion Picture & Television House sitting at the feet of the actress Anita Garvin, from the Laurel & Hardy films, listening in awe. Glenn Close arranged a party in honour of Anita Page when Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* opened. Brad Pitt is a huge fan of the original King Kong co-star Fay Wray, who recently gave an NFT lecture, and was this year invited to the Academy Awards Ceremony as part of its celebration of 70 years of the institution.

But there are many actresses who married and changed their name, whom even the Mutti-Mewse brothers couldn't coax back in front of the cameras. "You are writing to a person who no longer exists," came one reply. Another actress, Pauline Curly, claimed that she had left her film career firmly in the past: "When I found myself 36th billing between a dog called Starlight and a horse named Thunder I knew it was time to get out."

Frances Lee, 93, began her career as a Ziegfeld Follies dancer before becoming a star at the Al Christie Comedy Studios. She churned out a two-reeler comedy every week, and was offered a contract by Warner Brothers on the same day as Rudy Keeler and Al Jolson. "Many of my friends were frightened when Al Jolson made *The Jazz Singer* because they had odd or foreign voices," she said.

"Hollywood was in turmoil when sound came in. Some survived, but others were later hit by the stock market crash of 1929." In 1932, Frances auditioned for King Kong. She lost out to Fay Wray, who could scream louder. Lee still regrets that day, still bemoans the fact that she hadn't been told the scream was so important. When the brothers told her Wray was visiting London she asked, "I wonder how loud Fay can scream now. I bet I can scream louder."

Lee married the producer Anthony Bennen, brother of silent screen actress Enid Bennett. Like many screen husbands, he became jealous of her success and was delighted when she retired to have children. In the fifties, after 20 years away from the screen, and with her children grown up, she embarked on a second career.

Now Myrna Bennett (her real married name), she taught etiquette to, among others, Richard Nixon's daughters.

One former actress interviewed in the documentary, Joy Hodges, also left Hollywood and the movies of her own accord, and would never consider returning to the acting trade. Now based in Palm Springs, she was a song and dance star who married well and invested even better. "It is only since we began writing to her that she has begun to decorate her home with the photographs and memorabilia from her Hollywood days," say the twins. The high point of her career was her performance before 44,000 soldiers at Nuremberg Stadium.

She claims responsibility for getting Ronald Reagan the screen test that put him on the path to an acting career. She says they remained friends and she was a regular visitor to the White House during his extended run as president. "I saw Gorbachev there at a party in 1985," she says proudly, in the film. "I went right over to him and said — Gorbachev take down that wall. And he did." Ronald Reagan, the most famous former Hollywood actor to succeed with a new career in a new town, expressed interest in the twins' efforts to seek out the faded stars from Hollywood's distant past. "We had a brief telephone conversation with him in which he wished us luck," says Howard.

However, on this side of the great lake, interest from TV networks has been lukewarm. Astonishingly, no television company has bought the rights to this wonderful documentary. The Mutti-Mewse brothers enlisted a producer and funded the film with the aid of a rapidly-assembled consortium of friends, employees and family. As they have waited for television to pick up on the idea, Howard and Austin have seen a number of old Hollywood actresses die before they could commit their story to tape. One such star was the original Esmeralda in *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*, Patsy Ruth Miller. She died in 1995, having lived long enough to fulfil her final wish of seeing the outcome of the *OJ Simpson* trial.

"Patsy Ruth personified the pioneering and hedonistic spirit of the period," says Howard. "She was one of the first women to fly a plane." When the twins visited her she was lying on her bed, wearing a pair of gold mules sprouting marabou feathers. At her side was a wardrobe of dresses that Valentino had bought her, and on her dressing table the silver compact containing a silver straw and a razor blade, that accompanied her to Charlie Chaplin's cocaine parties. "I've been to every country in the world. Bed's a new adventure for me," she told the twins when they arrived.

It is the relationship of the twins to the interviewees and their intimacy with the subject that makes the film so poignant. Once relaxed, the actresses featured readily destroy and create a few myths on cinema's leading men that could warrant a new chapter in the Hollywood Babylon canon. Clarke Gable had his false teeth to thank for his sex appeal, and readily popped them out in company, exposing a line of brown stumps beneath, together with a bad case of halitosis. But there was nothing false about Gary Cooper's stud image. "He was hung like a horse and could keep going all night," one of the interviewees remembers, fondly.

For Page, it was the presence of Austin Mutti-Mewse that made the memory of her favourite leading man live again. Seated for her interview, rolling her eyes like the great silent star, she spotted Austin heading towards her with his black, slicked-back hair and a moustache as thin as a stocking seam. "It's Ramon," she called to her daughter. "It's Ramon Novarro."

— The Guardian



Anita Page, who starred in Broadway Melody, with her sixty-something daughter (file photo)

from Sunset Boulevard to Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?

When the Mutti-Mewse brothers began their magnificent obsession, they imagined the lives of the silent stars must have been strange, but not quite this strange. It was 1985, and they were living in their grandmother's house in New Malden. All that most English 13-year-olds knew of Hollywood was that Frankie had gone there. The twins became fascinated by the fact that silent movies had been a good night out for an older generation.

"The kids at school would go home and switch on neighbours," says Austin. "We'd rush back to watch a Harold Lloyd picture on BBC2." The film that got them hooked was *The Wind*. Its leading lady, Lillian Gish, became their penfriend after they discovered her address in *Who's Who*. By the time the actress died in 1993, the brothers corresponded regularly with a network of Hollywood veterans for whom they became like grandchildren, being offered advice on their own daily lives and future plans. They continue to write about 30 letters each week.

At the last count, there were close to 70 on the twins' mailing list. The number has fallen in recent years with the deaths of bigger names such as James Stewart and Robert Mitchum. Unsurprisingly, Garbo never replied to their letters. But Marlene Dietrich sent signed photographs in envelopes padded with empty stocking packets, and Dior perfume boxes from the forties.

The Last Tycoon, the protagonist accepts Hollywood with the resignation of a ghost assigned to a haunted house. This appears to be the lot of some of the former participants who, like Page, remain in a Hollywood that has long since forgotten them.

For Rose Hobart, it was not the studios but Senator Joe McCarthy who curtailed her career as a respected character actress, relegating her to a life as a pseudonymous writer. Before being called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and subsequently blacklisted as a communist, she had appeared in notable movie roles like *The Great Ziegfeld*.

Rather poignantly, she uses her interview to air her side of the story, recalling that the communist meeting she was accused of attending took place when she was in another city, giving birth. Hobart also talks about a man whose name was common currency with a number of actresses from the thirties: Howard Hughes. At one stage he had 169 of them in his employ, and four actors. Hobart was one of his many dates and she remembers Hughes being very deaf, and very vain.

"He always took his dates to see boats or planes, and places where there was loud machinery," she says in the documentary. "That way everyone would have to shout." Now 94, she is a resident at the Motion Picture & Television Country House, which provides a home for several hundred former actors, now in their twilight years.

Global Village

The crises of Russia's human rights

By Max Ognev
Agence France Presse

THE ASSASSINATION of Russia's foremost democracy activist Galina Starovoytova two weeks ago, has thrown the spotlight on a litany of human rights abuses in the country, against which she tirelessly campaigned.

Arbitrary justice, growing anti-Semitism, inadequate social security, overcrowded prisons packed with tubercular inmates... Activists paint a grim picture of a troubled country with scant respect for the basic dignities for which the slain parliamentarian crusaded.

And in a bitterly ironic twist, observers fear that the weak justice system and generalised corruption which so riled Starovoytova will conspire to hamper efforts to solve her murder. The police have a feeble record in such cases.

"The state is very weak and poor," said Lyudmila Alexeyeva, the head of the Helsinki

Human Rights Watch group in Moscow. "The professionals left the justice system for commercial companies, and the judiciary is unable to cope with crime because criminals have penetrated the top rungs of power."

"It has become very dangerous to be a human rights activist here," Alexeyeva added. "Rights are violated in every branch of life, the prisons, the army, the budget, race relations."

Starovoytova, who was gunned down outside her home in St. Petersburg, had long championed the cause of democracy and justice in Russia, regularly bemoaning that genuine freedom was for many a myth.

Seven years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia still has a handful of "political prisoners," most of whom stood up to the authorities on various issues and were jailed on flimsy and fabricated evidence, Alexeyeva said.

There is Aldaf Galejev, a radio journalist from Ufa who was jailed allegedly for broadcasts not to the taste of the regional governor. There is Grigory Pasko, a naval captain in Vladivostok who has been held in jail for a year awaiting trial on charges of espionage.

There is Alexander Nikitin, an ecologist held in jail for 10 months in 1996 who finally came to trial last month after prosecutors had spent almost three years trying to find charges to pin on him. Nikitin was accused of leaking state secrets in his probe into the hazards of Russian nuclear submarines.

Those held in Russian jails, meanwhile, are exposed to another catalogue of rights abuses: overcrowded cells, tuberculosis spreading rapidly and a food allocation of less than two cents a day per prisoner.

Prisoners are not the only victims of the poverty of the state. Public sector workers, pensioners, single mothers, destitute children,

all go for months if not years without seeing benefit payments.

Problems of race, meanwhile have simmered ever since the Soviet Union broke up, leaving Russia with a colourful mix of minorities who often face discrimination, rights observers say.

"If you have a Caucasian appearance you face trouble in Moscow, for example," Alexeyeva says. "Police look out for them, stop them to check their documents and often arrest them and hold them for several days for no apparent reason."

"This violates the Constitution which says that everybody can move and live everywhere freely," she added.

For example, Alviria originally comes from Azerbaijan but moved to Moscow to be with her husband in 1990. For nine or a decade the authorities have refused to give her the official registration papers.

"Without registration I am nothing in

Moscow because I have no job and can't earn money," she said. "I have kept asking them for years but they refused for no apparent reason."

Though Russia's Jewish population has yet to suffer such indignities, the current vogue for anti-Semitism has shocked observers. Parliament's failure to censure one of its number for stocking anti-Semitic outbursts testified to the weakness of the authorities to stand up for minority peoples and religions, they say.

Another underprotected group are the estimated 3,000 army conscripts killed each year as a result of hazing.

"This indicator is not going down year to year," said Tatyana Maricheva, the head of the Mothers Rights foundation, which looks out for abuse of soldier rights. "The state doesn't want to conduct the reforms in the army while the defence ministry is only interested in concealing what is going on."

Asian Games

Jordan pins high hopes as boxing competition begins

By Aileen Bannayan
in Amman and Jordan
sports media reporters
in Bangkok

JORDAN WEDNESDAY starts competition in boxing, an event in which the country is favoured to clinch at least three medals, and hopefully the Kingdom's first gold at the 13th Asian Games currently under way in Bangkok.

Jordan became the first Arab country on the medals table after Hussein Tahleh, a gold medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, won the silver medal in taekwondo on the first day of competition.

However, his teammates could not match his success and were eliminated from Tuesday's competitions.

In taekwondo: Ali Asmar won his first bout 2-1 against a Japanese player but later lost a shot at the bronze medal after losing 1-0 to a Vietnamese player.

Jordan's women's team also lost with Alisar Matar losing 6-1 to a Thai player and Luma Abu Judum losing 2-1 to her Japanese opponent.

The taekwondo team,

fresh out of a ten-day training camp in Taiwan, is favoured to win medals. The team is headed by Ibrahim Aqil, who won the gold at the recently concluded World Military Games in Houston, Texas.

The rest of his teammates were also medal winners at the last Pan-Arab Games in Beirut including silver medalist Mohammad Abul Ruz, Zaha Tahouni, Nancy Hindi, and bronze medalist Ahlam Bino.

In gymnastics: Jordan was also eliminated Wednesday with Ahmad Abdo and Shadi Khouri getting 45th and 47th places among 80 participants.

In weightlifting: Ayed Khawaldeh, who was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the Pan-Arab Games in Beirut, came in seventh among fifteen participants in the 56-kilogramme category.

Khawaldeh, however, set a new Arab record in the snatch and expressed hope that he will win gold at the Pan-Arab Games.

In judo: Jordan's Tawfiq Suleiman lost to a Mongolian and then to a

player from the Philippines.

In Wednesday's events Jordan competes in taekwondo with Mohammad Sahri, Ala'a Kitket and Ahlam Bino playing.

In boxing Jordan will compete with 180 athletes from 31 nations entered in the event.

Jordan's delegation pins high hopes on Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, who won three gold medals at the 8th Pan-Arab Games, the West Asian Games in Tehran and Jordan's only gold at the 18th Arab Boxing Championships which concluded in Tunisia recently.

The boxing team also includes Pan-Arab Games boxing gold medal winner Ayman Nadi, and bronze medalist Basel Hindawi. According to their coach Maytham Amer, both champions' draws assured them of bronze medals at the least.

In judo, Jordan is represented by Mousa Khalaf, a silver medalist at the Pan-Arab Games and in squash, the country's top player Mohammad Saeed will face Kuwait's Adel Sheiti. If he wins he will have a

tough match against one of Pakistan's top players, Zarak Khan.

Jordan also takes part in howling Wednesday.

In the past two participations in the Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94 Asian Games Jordan's sole medals were achieved through taekwondo with three silver and five bronze medals.

Jordan's 56-member delegation have joined 40 other nations at the century's final sporting event.

The Kingdom has 19 officials and 37 athletes in the last sporting event of the century where only Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan are missing the event. Jordan is competing in 11 sports: athletics, boxing, howling, gymnastics, judo, karate, shooting, squash, swimming, weightlifting and taekwondo.

Jordan is represented by the best athletes in their respective sports. The athletics team includes Fakhreddin Fuad — a gold medalist in the Pan-Arab Games high jump.

The team just concluded a training camp in Qatar where Fuad achieved 215

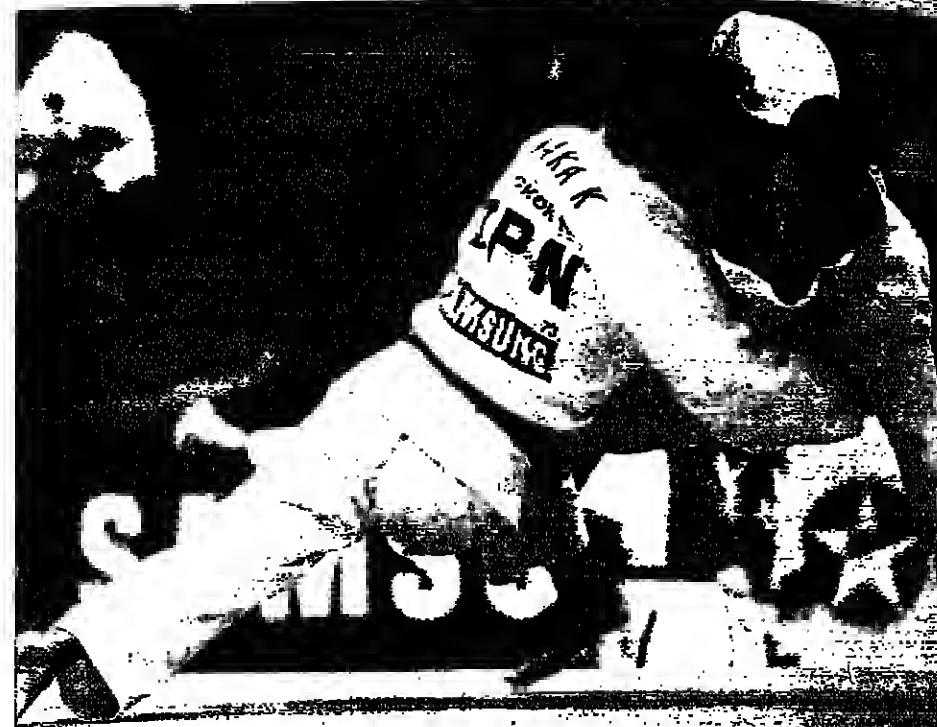
centimetres, and just came short of his record of 222.

Teammate Mohammad Abdul Baqi set a new Jordanian record in the triple jump with 15.53 — 18 centimetres more than his previous mark.

The delegation also includes swimming's bronze medalist Hana Majaj and karate bronze medalist Butheina Mahari.

Jordan is not taking part in team sports — notably soccer, handball and basketball — due to reasons pertaining to their respective federations.

The Jordan Olympic Committee has underlined the importance of taking part in the Asian Games saying it was "an invaluable chance to assess our teams and pinpoint our location on the map of Asian sports being part of plans of the Ministry of Culture and Youth to prepare teams for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games in Amman next summer and the 2000 Sydney Olympics."



Kenzon Nakamura (L) of Japan takes down Iran's Behrouz Parhizgar in the men's under 73 kg quarterfinal bout at the 13th Asian Games at Thammasat University Sports Complex in Bangkok. Nakamura beat Parhizgar to advance to the next round (AFP photo)



Iran's Kazemi Manijeh checks to see if her air pistol is loaded at the 10 metre air pistol competition during the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. Iran had three women competing in the event (AFP photo)



Chinese diver Jingjing Guo performs a dive during the women's 3m springboard competition at the 13th Asian Games. Guo dominated the field to win the gold medal with a score of 547.470 points (AFP photo)

Japan lead Asian Games fightback against China

BANGKOK (AFP) — Japan humiliated China's controversial swimmers at the Asian Games on Tuesday as the sporting superpower struggled to get the gold medals it has become used to.

Takahiro Mori, Masami Tanaka, Takashi Yamamoto and the men's freestyle relay team ushered in a defiant new mood as China failed to win any of the five swimming finals.

Taiwan's Tsai Shu-Min sneaked in ahead of Qin Caimi in the women's 200 metre freestyle to add to the angry mood in the Chinese camp.

China also faced a new day of toil in the shooting, where they managed only one gold out of six, but extraordinary performances in diving, weightlifting, and gymnastics gave China a slender 13-12 lead over Japan in the gold medal rankings.

It has been a long time since Japan has seen such a night of triumph in the

Asian Games swimming. Yamamoto won the men's 100m butterfly in a Games record of 53.34 sec. Tanaka took the women's 200m breaststroke. Mori the men's 400m individual medley and their men took the 4x200m freestyle relay.

"I'm No. 1 in Asia," shouted Yamamoto, as Japanese celebrations got underway.

China cannot now hope to match the 25 swimming golds they won in Hiroshima four years ago, where their feat was overshadowed by seven drug failures, including two world champions.

China have also been counting on picking off shooting range titles in Bangkok, but have managed only one out of the 10 decided so far.

Trainee teacher Dina Aspandiyarova of Kazakhstan claimed a gold in the women's air pistol final and silver in the team event to grab the glory on the second day. China got only the team air pistol gold.



Iran's Ali Daie (L, #10) fights past Oman's Khair Khadim H. Al A. (R, #16) during preliminary round play at the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. Oman won 4-2 (AFP photo)

The Games favourites' marksmen have been struggling all week with poor health and concentration.

China's Cai Yeqing who was second to Aspandiyarova highlighted the mounting nerves of her team. "Occasionally, I even did not think I was holding the gun properly. So I had to raise or lower the pistol several times," she said.

It was not all despondency for China, who won 137 gold medals in Hiroshima four years ago.

Yang Xia created a weightlifting sensation by setting two world records on her way to the gold medal in the women's 53kg class.

The 21-year-old Beijing student lifted 120kg in the

clean and jerk to overtake compatriot Wang Xuifen's record of 117.5 kg set at the world championships in Finland last month and her overall 212.5kg surpassed Wang's world record of 210kg.

Team-mate Le Maosheng then won the men's 62kg to continue China's impressive sweep of all four golds contended so far.

World champions Liu Xuan, Bi Wenjing, Kui Yuan and their young teammates Meng Fei, Xu Jing and Ling Jie also retained the women's team gymnastics title with 154.174 points. Japan were second and South Korea third.

They dedicated their vic-

tory to 17-year-old teammate, Sang Lan, who was paralysed while practising at the Goodwill Games in New York in July.

Sang is still recovering in the United States where she is said to be making excellent progress in her campaign to walk again.

While the swimmers are wallowing, Chinese divers are hitting new heights of excellence.

World championship silver medalists Guo Jingjing and Tian Liang produced dominant victories. Guo led a Chinese one-two in the women's three metre springboard ahead of Yang Lan, while Tian won the men's 10 metre platform in front of teammate Huang Qiang.

China and Japan shared the spoils in the cross-country cycling with Akihito Udagawa winning the men's race for Japan and Ma Ya Yanping the women's contest for China.

AFC calls emergency meeting over World Cup decision

BANGKOK (AFP) — The Asian Football Confederation will hold an emergency meeting next week to discuss FIFA's decision to award just four places to the continent at the World Cup in 2002.

Asian nations Japan and South Korea will host the first World Cup to be held in the continent and both will qualify automatically for the tournament.

But FIFA's executive committee decided on Friday to only award Asia two further places to be contested for by the rest of the confederation's 43 member associations.

The meeting will be held on December 15 and it is expected that the AFC will put pressure on FIFA to change the decision taken at the governing body's headquarters in Zurich according to an AFC official.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter had been due to visit the Thai capital last week-end after touring South Korea and Japan to see first hand the 2002 preparations but it was suddenly called off at the last minute when Blatter complained of feeling unwell.

Asia won four places at the last World Cup in France when Iran won a place-off against Australia last November. The continent had been awarded three certain places in France with a fourth place up for grabs in a play-off with the winner of Oceania's qualifying tournament.

One nation that will be affected by the decision is China.

Coach Bobby Houghton, who took over at the start of the year after China missed out on qualifying for France 98, said the decision was disappointing.

"If FIFA take a decision to allow co-hosting of the tournament and then only allow two further qualifiers then it's unfair on the rest of Asia. The decision is a negative for everyone else."

"If you are going to have two automatic qualifiers then you have to make adjustments to make it fair on everyone else. When the last World Cup qualifiers started there were four places to fight for but now it's been halved."

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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Sports

LOCALS

Jordan takes part

AMMAN — Six athletes representing Jordan took part in the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. The athletes are: Hussein Tahleh, Ali Asmar, Tawfiq Suleiman, Ahmad Abdo, Shadi Khouri, and Mousa Khalaf.

Games opening c

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee has expressed its hope that the 13th Asian Games will be a success for the Jordanian athletes.

United host

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee has expressed its hope that the 13th Asian Games will be a success for the Jordanian athletes.

Watch out for the new play

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee has expressed its hope that the 13th Asian Games will be a success for the Jordanian athletes.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Jordan takes part in Endurance Race

AMMAN — Six athletes will represent the Kingdom in the World Endurance Race which starts in Abu Dhabi Thursday morning with 200 riders taking part. The 160-kilometre-long event has attracted participants from a record 40 countries. HRH Princess Alia, president of the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation, will attend the event. Representing Jordan are Jocelyn Abul Ragheh, Abdul Fatah Salem, Ghassan Qassar, Aref Mahmoud, Fahed Faisal and Mohammad Ibrahim.

Al Jazireh's board meets soccer players

AMMAN — Al Jazireh Club's board of directors has invited members of the soccer team to a meeting next Saturday to discuss several future issues after the team's unsatisfactory results in the Premier League. The club now has a new board headed by Riyadh Hrouh. Meanwhile, the board accepted the resignation of team trainer Mustafa Hassan and asked the club's sport committee to nominate players for the under-23 category.

Games opening ceremony discussed

AMMAN — Egyptian expert Hamid Abdul Khaleq arrives in Amman today to help set up preparations of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 9th Pan-Arab Games, which will be held here Aug. 15-31, 1999.

Abdul Khaleq will also meet with Minister of Youth Talal Sa'at, Al Hassan, Minister of Education Fawzi Gharaibeh and Games Director Isam Aridah. A French expert in the field visited Jordan earlier in the week.

Jordan gets gold in judo tourney

AMMAN — Jordan's Rand Rousan became the first Jordanian to win a gold medal in judo in an international tournament. Minister of Youth Talal Sa'at, Al Hassan Tuesday congratulated her and other players who achieved one silver and two bronze medals in the Cyprus International Judo Championship. The Jordanian team has concluded a joint training camp in Nicosia with the Cypriot and Bulgarian national teams.

Games committee visits Irbid

IRBID — A delegation of the 9th Pan-Arab Games' Executive Committee Monday inspected sports facilities at Al Hassan Sport City and Yarmouk University. Committee Vice-Chairman Awwad Haddad, headed the delegation which toured several facilities where some of the events of next summer's Games will be held.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

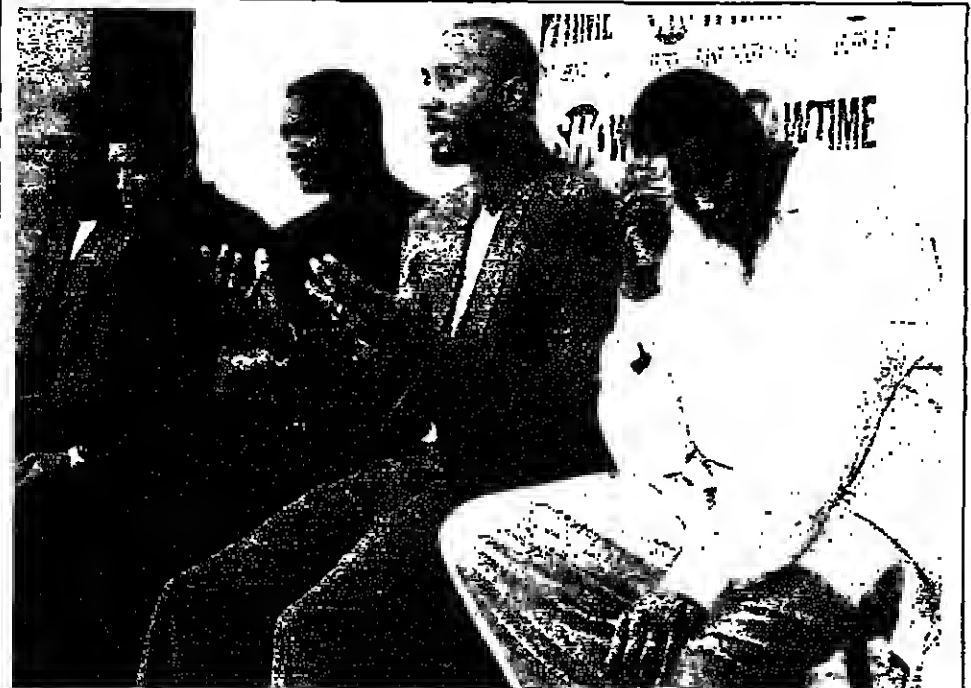
DiMaggio in coma

HOLLYWOOD (R) — The legendary former New York Yankee, Joe DiMaggio, remained in poor condition in a Florida hospital on Tuesday, amid reports he was in a coma and had received last rites.

DiMaggio, 84, recently underwent surgery to have a cancerous tumour removed from his right lung.

"The outlook has dimmed over the last 72 hours," Dr. Earl Barron, DiMaggio's internist and cardiologist, said. "He is not in good shape."

DiMaggio, considered baseball's greatest living player, was three-time American League Most Valuable Player, holds one of baseball's most revered records — a 56-game hitting streak in 1941. He played in 10 World Series, posted 2,214 hits, 361 home runs and 1,537 RBI in 6,821 games during a 13-season career.



NBA stars (L-R) Glen Rice of the Charlotte Hornets, Allan Houston of the New York Knicks, Dominique Wilkins, who now plays in Greece, Alonzo Mourning of the Miami Heat and Patrick Ewing of the New York Knicks talk to the press about the NBA lockout situation during a news conference to announce "The Game," a Showtime-sponsored charity basketball game to be held in Atlantic City 19 December. The game, featuring some of the NBA players from Dream Teams 1, 2 and 3, will be held for charity. The lockout has caused the cancellation of NBA games in November and December and threatens to wipe out the entire season (AFP photo)

Van Exel to sue NBA

NEW YORK (AP) — The weekend passed with hardly anyone noticing that David Stern managed to keep Larry Spivey out of the NBA for one year, after all.

Now, Nick Van Exel is suing to get out.

Van Exel, who wants to play in Europe and stay there even if the lockout ends, plans to file suit against the NBA, USA Basketball and FIBA later this week, his agent said.

Van Exel and several other plaintiffs, including Marcus Camby of the New York Knicks, allege that the NBA and USA Basketball will not give clearance to FIBA, the sport's world governing body, for a player to continue playing under a European League contract if his NBA team wants him back after the lockout.

Van Exel, traded in June from the Los Angeles Lakers to the Denver Nuggets, has one year left on his NBA contract for about \$2.1 million, which means he has lost about \$700,000 in salary. Agent James Bryant has received offers from two or three teams overseas, and said Van Exel would make about \$2 million and then return as a free agent for the 1999-2000 NBA season.

Today will be the fourth day since the last collective bargaining session was held, and neither side has shown an urgency to schedule another one.

The season, if there ever is one, cannot begin until a mid-January at the earliest.

United host Bayern in winner-takes-all battle

PARIS (AFP) — Full-strength Manchester United host Bayern Munich, amid warnings by Germans playing in the English Premiership, in a winner-takes-all battle in the last round of European Champions League matches on Wednesday.

Whoever wins at Old Trafford will win Group D but, remarkably, a narrow defeat could also see Bayern go through as one of the top two runners-up if other results go their way.

The winners of each group progress, which is simple, but with only the best two runners-up qualifying for the quarterfinals, possible permutations are causing headaches and heartache across Europe.

Smaller clubs are challenging the traditional champions on results so far. Defending champions Real Madrid apart, the competition could easily reach the quarters without any of the other champions since 1992.

The 1996 champions Juventus are third in Group B without a win in five matches and need to beat Rosenborg Trondheim and hope other results go their way.

The 1995 winners Ajax are also only third in Group A, while 1992 champions Barcelona are out and 1993 champions Marseille, 1994 winners AC Milan and 1997 winners Borussia Dortmund are not even in the competition.

Manchester United were the 1968 winners and their only other European triumph has been the 1991 European Cup Winners-Cup title at the expense of Barcelona in Rotterdam.

United on Monday reported a clean bill of health ahead of the Old Trafford clash. Winger Ryan Giggs, now fully recovered from a broken foot, returns to the

European stage for the first time since United thrashed Borussia Dortmund in Denmark on October 21.

And even though Andy Cole was substituted during Saturday's 1-1 draw at Aston Villa he is favourite to partner Dwight Yorke in attack.

Liverpool's German import Karlheinz Riedle, who scored twice in Dortmund's 3-1 win over Juventus in the 1997 final, and Newcastle's former Bayern player Dietmar Hamann both believed the signs were not good for the visitors.

In the other Group D game, Brondby host Barcelona in a meaningless match both sides already eliminated.

Juventus will be praying that history repeats itself when they walk out to face Group B leaders Rosenborg for their final match.

This team last season, Juventus needed to beat Manchester United and hope other result went their way if the Turin club were to reach the quarterfinals.

Mercifully, Filippo Inzaghi scored an 84th-minute winner against United and the other results enabled Juventus to sneak into the last eight — and later endure a heartbreaking final defeat against Real Madrid.

On Wednesday, Juventus' fate is once again in the lap of the gods.

The Italian champions need to beat the Norwegians at home and pray that Athletic Bilbao beat Galatasaray in Spain — even though neither

Juventus for Bilbao have won a single match so far. Galatasaray are hampered by the absence of suspended star Hakan Sukur.

The major problem, however, is the absence of star striker Alessandro Del Piero, who will not be alongside Inzaghi again before next season. The two reserves, Uruguayan Daniel Fonseca and Nicola Amoroso, have both struggled with either injury or poor form.

In Group A, three clubs still have a chance of qualifying. Ajax have a slim chance of going through as the best second-placed club should they win at Porto and Olympiakos win or draw against Croatia Zagreb — meaning the Greeks would win the group.

However, Ajax are without suspended offensive midfielder and captain Richard Witschge, defenders Danny Blind, who has a groin injury, and Tom Sier, who has a hamstring pull.

If Zagreb beat Olympiakos, they could jump from third to top spot on a three-way tie with 10 points with who advances depending on the goals scored in the final matches.

Inter Milan top Group C, thanks to super sub Roberto Baggio, who scored two late goals at the San Siro in their 3-1 victory over Real Madrid in their last game nearly two weeks ago.

Inter have new coach Mircea Lucescu of Romania in charge for their last game against eliminated Sturm Graz of Austria — who have Iran's Mehrdad

Minavand, Mario Posch and Roman Mahlich out injured. Lucescu took over following the sacking of Gigi Simone on November 30.

A win would see Inter into the quarter-finals as the group winners. Should Real Madrid win at home to Spartak Moscow, they would also go through either as group winners or one of the best runners-up.

Should Inter lose their last game, the winner of the Madrid v Moscow game wins the group.

Spartak midfielder Miroslav Romaschenko will miss the game with a knee injury which forced him to undergo surgery in a German hospital last week.

ANNOUNCEMENT

ISTIKLAL HOSPITAL INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION OF HOSPITAL SUPPLIERS

Istiklal Hospital in Amman is soliciting expressions of interest from hospital suppliers joint-venture local with / or international for submission of pre-qualification data who can qualify through experience with projects of similar size. For supply, install, commission, train and maintenance of medical, non-medical hospital equipment and furniture for Istiklal Hospital in Amman.

Suppliers who possess experience in this field, and feel qualified financially and technically, and wish to participate in the above tender are invited to submit their pre-qualification documents, not later than 12:00 hours of Monday, Dec. 21st 1998 at:

Al-Belad Medical Services Co. (Istiklal Hospital)
Wasfi Al Tal Street - Shamiah Centre - Fifth Floor - Office No. (503)
P.O. Box 1493, Amman 11821, Jordan
Tel: 00 (962) - (6) - 5523282, 00 (962) - (6) - 5523283
Fax: 00 (962) - (6) - 5523284
E-mail: ist-hosp@nets.com.jo

Eligible suppliers may obtain free summary information document about the project from the above mentioned address.

Results of pre-qualification shall be announced and advised to participants as soon as they become available.

Pre-qualification documents should include the following:-

1. Financial capability of the supplier, i.e. financial references, financial statements for 2 years, turnover ... etc.
2. Technical capability of the supplier, including details of experience and back ground of personnel ... etc.
3. Detailed documents showing similar projects executed by the supplier, full names and addresses of firms for whom such services were rendered, and details of projects including contract cost and completion periods.

2nd Division Basketball Championship
Wihdat, Fuheis aim to maintain unbeaten run

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Wihdat have the chance to increase their lead atop the Second Division Basketball Championship standings when they face Ebbin Wednesday in their fourth match of the eight-team event which concludes Dec. 25.

Playing in the Second Division for the second year after finishing runner up last year, Al Wihdat have maintained an unbeaten streak for now going over the 100-point mark in all their wins so far.

Led by coach Ghailh Al Najjar, who was previously at Al Ahli, they are assured of clinching one of the two qualifying berths to the First Division next year.

In their last match they ended Homentmen's winning streak by scoring a 107-48 victory that kept them leading while their

opponents dropped to third.

Homentmen, formerly a First Division team, are struggling to regain their place for the third year now, and need to win all their remaining matches to take the second slot to move back to the First Division.

They next have an easy match against Samma. However, they are likely to face strong opposition from Al Fuheis, who are now in second place after a 90-53 win over Al Rayeh.

Al Fuheis next have an important match against Al Ashrafieh who are fourth after beating Samma 51-27.

Abu Nusair, who lost by a mere point 54-53 to Ebbin in their last match, play the fourth match of the day against Al Rayeh.

The last event on the Jordan Basketball Federation's (JBF) current agenda — two of the eight

teams taking part in the second division will be promoted this year making the total number of First Division teams eight instead of six.

Missing from the event is Al Wajani, also a former First Division team who were relegated but failed to participate in the second division.

Also not playing are teams like Gazzei Hashem, Karak and Sahab.

The JBF this year organised only three other events: the first division and the Under-14 won by Al Orthodoxi, and the Under-16 won by Al Jazireh.

The women's, juniors, and Under-22 were cancelled while the JBF is discussing holding the Under-18 with the concerned clubs.

The First Division includes Al Orthodoxi, Al Ahli, Al Jazireh, Al Jalil, Al Hussein, Al Jeel.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Wihdat	3	3	-	320	166	6
Fuheis	3	3	-	230	167	6
Homentmen	3	2	1	189	219	5
Ashrafieh	3	1	2	156	199	4
Rayeh	3	1	2	154	192	4
Abu Nusair	3	-	3	183	231	3
Ebbin	2	1	1	110	121	3
Samma	2	-	2	52	99	2

Wednesday's matches

Rayeh-Abu Nusair	4:30 p.m.	Terra Sancta
Fuheis-Ashrafieh	6:00 p.m.	Terra Sancta
Ebbin-Wihdat	4:30 p.m.	Hassan Sports City
Samma-Homentmen	6:30 p.m.	Hassan Sports City

16-year-old best swimmer of 1998

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sydney schoolboy Ian Thorpe is still only 16 but is now officially ranked alongside some of the greatest names in world swimming.

Thorpe was officially named U.S. Swimming World magazine's 1998 men's international swimmer for 1998 on Tuesday.

"To join such greats as Alex Popov, Kieren Perkins, Matt Biondi, Michael Gross and Vladimir Salnikov, who have all won the award in the past makes me feel very humble," said Thorpe. "I'm actually quite surprised because 1998 has seen some great performance, particularly from my Australian team-mate Michael Klim and Grant Hackett."

Klim, who won the award last year after his 100m butterfly world record, was considered unlucky not to take out the award for the second consecutive year after his four gold, two silver and a bronze at last January's Perth world titles.

But while Klim's performances dimmed as the year progressed, "Thorpedo" went from strength to strength.

Thorpe started the year by becoming Australia's youngest men's world swimming champion in Perth, tak-

ing out the 400m freestyle. Eight months later, he swam within an agonising one hundredths of a second of the world 200m freestyle record at the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games and was just 0.55sec outside Kieren Perkins' world 400m record days later.

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An international project office located in Amman has an opening for a full-time secretary with the following qualifications for two years with possibility for extension:

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- Filing skills.
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- Motivated & Outgoing personality.
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Interested candidates should send their CVs accompanied with their qualifications and recent photo no later than December 17, 1998 to the following address:

Project Manager
P.O. Box: 182938
Amman 11118-Jordan

JOB OPPORTUNITY

The National Centre for Human Resources Development is seeking to employ a Financial Officer with the following qualifications and skills:

1. Jordanian nationality
 2. Minimum of seven years experience in a finance function;
 3. University degree in a related field with international accreditation such as Certified Public Accountant (CPA) or Chartered Accountant (CA); Relevant experience in international business & financial practices;
 4. Proficiency in utilising financial/accounting computer software packages;
 5. Experience in report writing;
 6. Fluent in English and Arabic.
- Only qualified candidates should send their CVs to the following address not later than Dec. 20, 1998 to:
- Administration Manager**
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Iraqi government accuses its human rights critics of hypocrisy

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's government, branded a cruel dictatorship by the West, accused its human rights critics on Tuesday of double standards.

At the opening of a Baghdad conference marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Al Sahaf said Western nations cynically used human rights to bully developing nations.

And he accused them of hypocrisy for lecturing the world on human rights while pursuing "organised genocide" by maintaining economic sanctions against Iraq.

"Human rights have become a political weapon in the hands of some states and a selective measure which is subject to double standards," Sahaf said.

"They have also become a

means of blackmail and political pressures on other particular states," he added.

"It has become clear to all that the exploitation of human rights by the dominant states, with the United States of America at the head, aims at achieving their own interests, spreading their influence and imposing their will."

Iraq has been under stringent U.N. sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. It says the sanctions, which cannot be lifted until it meets U.N. disarmament requirements, have killed 1.5 million Iraqis by depriving them of food and medicine.

"During the past eight years this unjust embargo has constituted a flagrant violation of the collective and individual human rights of Iraqis," Sahaf said.

The United States 1997 Human Rights report rated

Iraq's record as "extremely poor," citing reports of 2,000 summary executions, arbitrary arrests and torture, and severe limits on freedom of religion and movement.

It quoted a U.N. report which said freedom of speech and the press were non-existent, and accused Iraqi security forces of "widespread, serious and systematic human rights abuses."

But conference delegates said the suffering caused by sanctions outweighed government violations.

British parliamentarian George Galloway said "very serious human rights violations" continued in Iraq but added that they paled in comparison to the sanctions, which he said killed "as many people as Pol Pot killed in the genocide in Cambodia."

"It's all very well Western

politicians talking about human rights on the micro-level, on the individual level, and I would in normal times be with them on that. But you can't talk about human rights on that level if you are justifying and indeed responsible for such widespread and mass slaughter of a whole nation," Galloway told reporters.

Others questioned Western criteria of human rights.

"Before the sanctions, Iraq satisfied the right of lodging, food and education for all of its people," said Boubacar Maiga, from Mali, adding that the right to health and welfare overrode the luxuries of an open political process.

"You cannot impose democracy on a country which does not know its rules... Democracy that we have in Africa has cost us dearly."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran ready for negotiations on islands

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's foreign minister said his country is ready to pursue bilateral negotiations with the United Arab Emirates on three Gulf islands which control the world's main oil supply route and are claimed by both nations. Foreign Minister Mohammad Khatami said in a phone conversation Monday with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that his country is "ready to remove misunderstandings" on the issue, according to the official news agency IRNA.

Turkish author rejects award

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Internationally acclaimed Turkish author Orhan Pamuk has declined an official state award in protest against Turkey's treatment of dissenting authors and artists. Turkish newspapers reported Tuesday, "I categorically reject this title," Pamuk said on learning he had been named "state artist" by Turkish President Suleyman Demirel, along with 71 other writers, painters and actors. "This state has thrown Ismail Besikci, Ragip Duman, Dogu Perincek and many other journalists into jail. As a writer I cannot accept this title under those circumstances." Dozens of writers and journalists are currently imprisoned in Turkey after falling foul of the country's anti-terrorism laws, which effectively restrict freedom of speech.

Strike paralyzes Sanaa University

SANAA (AFP) — The 1,500 teachers of Sanaa University went on strike Tuesday to press demands for a 50 per cent pay rise, in an action which could drag on for 10 days. Some 3,000 other employees of Yemen's largest university joined the strike, demanding the same increase. The teachers receive an average monthly salary of \$200, and the government has already approved the pay rise, but it has yet to be implemented. Sanaa University has 55,000 students.

Airport shut 12 hours after plane swerves

NAIROBI (R) — Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport was closed to all air traffic for 12 hours late on Monday after a Saudi Arabian Airlines aircraft swerved off the runway after landing, officials said on Tuesday. An official at the Kenya Airports Authority said the airport reopened shortly after 5 a.m. on Tuesday and that all flights into Nairobi on Monday night had been rerouted to Mombasa or to airports in Tanzania and Uganda. No injuries were reported in the accident.

Iran says 176 have died of AIDS

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's anti-AIDS campaign chief said Tuesday that 176 people had died of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in the country by the end of October 1998. Nasser Yeganeh, who heads the government campaign to fight the syndrome, was quoted by the official news agency IRNA as putting the total number of HIV-positive people at 1,443, of whom 206 had developed full-blown AIDS. Drug abuse is usually blamed for most cases of HIV infection in Iran.

Doctor banned for illegal transplant

CAIRO (AFP) — The union of Egyptian doctors has banned a renowned urologist from practising medicine after he performed an illegal kidney transplant on a foreign national, a union spokesman said Tuesday. Surgeon Amr Ayad defied union laws last year when he performed a successful kidney transplant on a Syrian businessman who paid \$30,000 for the procedure. The donor, an Egyptian taxi driver, filed a complaint with the union when Ayad refused to give him \$3,500, allegedly his share of the fee. Organ transplants between Egyptians and foreign nationals are subject to rigorous controls and permission must first be obtained from the physicians' union.

Kuwait seeks U.S. howitzers

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's defence minister has stressed his country's need for American howitzers in a deal worth more than \$600 million that faces fierce parliamentary opposition. "The Kuwaiti army is in dire need for the U.S. made Paladin howitzers that fill the shortage suffered by the land forces," said Defence Minister Sheikh Salem Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah in a statement issued by the official Kuwait News Agency Monday. Sheikh Salem was responding in a written statement to questions posed by a member of Kuwait's elected parliament over the purchase of the self-propelled artillery. "These deals are between the Kuwaiti and U.S. governments and are executive arrangements subjects to the provisions of the security agreements signed by both states... The defence ministry has a written guarantee from the U.S. administration regarding the guns," the statement said.

'35 bodies found in Algerian graves'

ALGIERS (R) — Rescue workers excavating two mass graves near Algiers have found the bodies of 35 people believed to be victims of Islamist rebels, and are still digging, the newspaper El Watan reported on Tuesday.

El Watan, considered to be the best informed daily on security matters, quoted the rescue workers as saying they expected the number of bodies to rise to more than 200.

The newspaper said the victims had been seized by Armed Islamic Group (GIA) members who killed them and dumped their bodies in two wells in an orange grove some 20 kilometres southwest of central Algiers.

Workers have been excavating the wells over the past fortnight since it was discovered that they had long been used as impromptu mass graves. It was not clear how long the bodies had been there.

"The heap of bodies dumped on top of others reaches 20 metres in one place," the newspaper quoted rescuers as saying.

El Watan quoted workers as saying that some bodies had been tied up with wire. "At one site, we dug 40 metres deep and we have to excavate a further 30 metres to reach

the bottom," the newspaper quoted the workers as adding.

The area where the bodies were found is located in what Algerians call "the triangle of death" between central Algiers and Blida, 50 kilometres south, where scores of civilians have been kidnapped from an area embracing Larbaa, Metfah, Sidi Moussa and Eucalyptus.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed in this area in the past four years and the government has held Islamist rebels responsible.

The government has so far made no comment on the discovery of the mass graves and the state-run media have not mentioned them.

La Nouvelle Republique daily said on Tuesday that suspected Islamist rebels killed three peasants on Sunday night at Bou Ismail area in Tipaza province, 60 kilometres west of Algiers.

Also on Sunday, suspected Islamist rebels slashed the throats of nine farm workers, mostly women and children, in the same province, according to government security officials.

Sunday's killing brought to more than 60 the number of people killed during the past seven days.

Cyprus waters down Israeli spying charges

LARNACA (R) — Prosecutors in Cyprus have watered down spying charges against two Israelis held in custody for the past month, documents produced in court Tuesday show.

The two accused were due to enter a plea before the island's criminal court Tuesday but the case was postponed at their lawyer's request to review the new charges, and the court adjourned the hearing to Dec. 21.

The new charge sheet, which judicial sources made available to journalists, keeps

the original charges of espionage but drops the initial accusation that the Israelis passed on any secret information they may have gathered.

They now face two counts, of conspiracy and of spying by collecting information on the defence of the east Mediterranean island "which could have been useful to any other state."

Changing the charges before the formal trial process starts in a criminal court is not unusual in Cyprus, where police draft the initial charges but the attorney general's office then takes over the case.

Police sources said the attorney-general's office made the changes in the charges.

The new charges were not read out in court. "I may raise some objections," defence lawyer Antis Triantafyllides told the brief 10-minute hearing when requesting the postponement.

Udi Hargov, 37, and Igal Damary, 49, were arrested in early November in a south coast village close to a sensitive military area.

Police, who had placed the area under surveillance after receiving reports of suspected Israeli activity there, said they

found sophisticated listening equipment in the apartment the two men had rented.

Hargov and Damary, slight bespectacled men who have grown goatee beards and moustache during their detention, looked cheerful as they entered the courtroom through a crowd of journalists and armed anti-terrorist police.

They face sentences of up to 10 years in prison if found guilty of espionage.

Israel has denied the two men were spying on Cyprus, but has given no public explanation of what they were

doing close to a military zone, with listening equipment, on the night on Nov. 5.

The accused were frequent visitors to Cyprus. Police said they had also spied on military installations in mid-October, during large scale Cypriot-Greek military manoeuvres on the divided island.

Cyprus and Israel enjoy close relations, but the case has stirred considerable unease among Greek Cypriots over the true intentions of the Jewish state, which has a military agreement with their arch-foe Turkey.



HUNGER STRIKE: Palestinian women chant slogans during a protest in Gaza to support the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails on Tuesday. The women, including relatives of the detainees, marked the third day of a hunger strike in Gaza in solidarity with the prisoners who are already on hunger strike (Reuters photo)

Iranian court acquits Rafsanjani's daughter

TEHRAN (R) — An Iranian court has acquitted former President Akbar Hasbemi Rafsanjani's daughter, a leading moderate newspaper publisher, of almost all charges of libelling the police, her paper reported on Tuesday.

Hasbemi's daily, one of those which have been under pressure from hardliners trying to stem President Mohammad Khatami's liberal reforms, had accused a top security official of being nearby when two members of Khatami's cabinet were beaten up.

"The jury of the Press Court found Faezeh Hasbemi, publisher of Zan

newspaper, not guilty of all but one of the charges raised against by the police," Zan (Woman) reported.

The court did find Hasbemi, who is also a member of the parliament, guilty of the minor charge of insulting the police intelligence department, but said she deserved a lighter sentence, the newspaper said.

The court will pass sentence at a later date.

Zan had said the commander of the police intelligence department, Mohammad-Reza Naqdi, had been seen near the scene when the two aides were beaten up in September.

The assault was one of the most brazen in a series of attacks by hardliners on gatherings of moderates.

Zan has been outspoken on women's rights and other politically sensitive issues. On Monday it was the only daily among Tehran's two dozen newspapers to report that dissident poet Mohammad Mokhtari had gone missing since leaving his home in Tehran last week.

Several liberal and critical newspapers and magazines have been closed to recent months amid calls by leading conservatives for press freedoms granted under Khatami to be curbed.

Bride dons \$6 million diamond dress

NAPLES (R) — An Italian bride tied the knot on Monday in a \$6 million dress dripping with diamonds, some of which she said she planned to donate to an AIDS charity after the ceremony.

Sabrina Battaglia, 31, turned up for her wedding to Aniello Formisano, 32, in Naples' elegant church of San Francesco-di Paola in an ivory dress studded on the bodice and skirt with 6,000 glittering gems.

U.S. agents seize smuggled moon rock

MIAMI (R) — A lump of 3.9-billion-year-old moon rock brought to Earth by the crew of Apollo 17 and given to Honduras as a gift, has been seized because it was smuggled into the United States, the U.S. Customs Service said Monday. The rock, given to the government of Honduras a quarter century ago, was being offered for sale for \$5 million, U.S. officials said.

Elections from horses to frying pans

CARACAS (R) — What do a white horse, a frying pan and a Christmas tree have to do with the next Venezuelan presidential election? They are just some of the symbols which have been used by candidates in campaign commercials leading up to Sunday's presidential vote. The race has been running candidate Hugo Chavez desperately trying to shed his image as a man of violence while his opponents seek to focus public attention on the bloody coup attempt which led to 1992.

Man beaten for setting off fireworks

MBABANE (AFP) — An angry mob in the Swaziland capital beat up a Mozambican man unconscious for setting off fireworks, banned in the city following a bomb blast in November, press reports said here Tuesday. Police explained that the public was still angry about the November blast, which killed a security guard, wounded nine people and partially destroyed the offices of the deputy prime minister.

FBI release 1,275 pages of Sinatra's file

WASHINGTON (R) — The FBI released 1,275 pages of its files on Frank Sinatra on Tuesday, showing the agency linked the late legendary singer with Mafia leaders, Hollywood moguls and the inner workings of Las Vegas casinos. The documents also show the FBI's accounts of Sinatra as the victim of threats to his life and the target of extortion schemes.

Russian thieves swipe rabbits and blood

MOSCOW (R) — Thieves robbed a bloodbank in a remote Russian region, stealing blood and rabbits used for biological tests, it was reported on Tuesday. Police in Syktyvkar, capital of the northern Russian Komi region, were planning to search markets to make sure the rabbit meat — which could be dangerous to eat — was not offered for sale. Tass said.

Iran says power cuts will continue

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's energy and finance minister said Wednesday that power cuts would continue through the winter because of the late arrival of spare parts needed to repair power plants. Adnan Moudi, quoted by the official IRNA news agency, said the American and German companies on the U.N. Committee of contracts for the spare parts.

Ciller refuses
ANGARA R — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl refused to meet with Pope John Paul II on his visit to Germany, saying the Pope's visit was a purely religious matter and that the Chancellor's role was to represent the state.

Volume 24
Numb

Crown Prince receives Aziz
AMMAN (R) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan received Aziz bin Abdullah bin Khalifa bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, at the Amman Palace on Tuesday.

Born to try help Israel U.N. Security Council bid
BONN (R) — German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said on Wednesday that Bonn would do what it could to support Israel's bid to join the United Nations Security Council.

45 Algerians killed
ALGIERS (AFP) — Suspected Islamist rebels killed 45 people, including an Algerian minister, in an attack on a hotel in Algiers on Tuesday.

Finland to open a contact office on the West Bank
HELSINKI (AFP) — Finland on Tuesday announced it will open a contact office next year in Jerusalem, on the West Bank, to coordinate its aid to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Since 1995, Finland has been allowed to open liaison offices in areas under the control of the PNA, but they are not considered diplomatic missions. An Irish, German, Danish and the Netherlands have already opened similar offices.

Israel to court-martial soldier
TEL AVIV (AP) — The Israeli army decided today to court-martial a soldier who was heading a Palestinian mob which looted a Jewish settlement and killed a peacekeeper. The soldier, Eyal Matar, will be charged with not having a loaded weapon and not bringing charges against the young soldier who fired the shot which killed the peacekeeper.

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